FELIX
WESTERWOUDT

MISSIONER IN BORNEO

12419

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Father Felix Westerwoudt

FELIX WESTERWOUDT MISSIONER IN BORNEO

By E. v. R. W.
(His sister)

WITH A COMMENDATORY LETTER FROM
HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL VAN ROSSUM
CARDINAL PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA

TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH BY
REVEREND T. W. LEFEBER
OF SAINT JOSEPH'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
OF MILL HILL

WITHDRAWN

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PREFACE

Among his brethren of Mill Hill, the memory of Father Felix Westerwoudt is preserved as most precious. Many who were his contemporaries at Hageveld and Warmond repeatedly expressed, and not without emotion, their sincere veneration for the humble missioner who in far-off Borneo had given himself so generously to his mission work.

OCT 25 '26

It had long been our intention to gather some particulars of Father Westerwoudt's life. Recently we learned of the existence of a biography written by one of his nearest relatives for the occasion of a family jubilee, and we requested permission to make this account more widely known. After some hesitation, the permission was granted. The story is all the more touching because it is so intimate, so loving, so simple.

As for its accuracy, Father Reyffert, Father Westerwoudt's co-worker in Borneo, declares: "Having known Felix intimately for many years, living and working with him during the latter part of his life, I readily join in the praise which is bestowed upon him as a humble, hard-working, and holy priest, beloved by his flock."

The question naturally arose as to whether it would not have been more in accord with Father Westerwoudt's spirit to keep his story confined to a small circle. One of his fellow priests wrote that, to his mind, Father Felix "would prefer to remain like the flower in the mountain cleft, blooming unseen by man, blooming for God alone".

Thanks be to God, among Catholic missioners there are many like him! Yet we were of the opinion that much good might be accomplished by the publication of this life story. This priest, though dead, will still preach by his example, and will prove to the world that even in our own days apostolic men are found to whom the folly of the Cross is sublimest wisdom!

— H. AHAUS
(*Rector, Saint Joseph's Preparatory College*)

Tilburg, Holland, 1918.

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A LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL VAN ROSSUM, CARDINAL PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA

The picture of Father Felix Westerwoudt, drawn in this simple and touching biography, might be gazed upon with great profit by present and future missioners. It furnishes them with a living, concrete example, more clear and forcible than many abstract suggestions and lessons. In this picture will be seen, not only the man of principle, having but one ideal; not only the man of character, directing all his endeavors toward the realization of that ideal, and sacrificing all to that; but also the apostle, filled with love for the Crucified Jesus, and using all efforts to become like Him and remain united to Him, knowing that his own personal sanctity is a requisite to spread this love and successfully preach it to others.

Father Westerwoudt burned with desire to become like unto Jesus, and to remain united with Him there where our Divine Redeemer opened up the fountain of all salvation — on the Cross. He well knew that in that union lay the strength to gain the treasure of faith for the poor souls

of the heathen; and he did not stop with knowing this, but in an heroic manner during long years, day after day, he turned the knowledge into practice.

Hence, we are confident that those who, answering God's call, have chosen the apostolate for their inheritance, will reap the greatest benefit from the repeated reading of and meditation upon this book. They will find their ideals purified by it more and more, and will ever draw nearer and nearer to the highest ideal, there to remain. The love of Jesus will become the only motive urging them towards the field afar, and will grow continually in them, teaching them to make sacrifices. It will awaken in them the thirst for suffering, for mortification, poverty, hardship, disappointment, and trial,— means which Jesus Himself chose to accomplish the work of our Redemption. These they will choose for their life companions; these they will joyfully welcome and embrace, in order to be more intimately united with the Heart of Christ, remembering the Apostle's words: "When I am weak, then am I strong."

How eagerly, then, do we desire that this book should be read by missioners of both sexes, by those who are now being trained to the sublime life, by the youth in seminaries and colleges, that while listening to God's call they may learn

from the example of Father Westerwoudt to set aside and overcome all the difficulties and obstacles which may hinder them from accomplishing God's Holy Will. And if we may express a wish it is that this book may be translated into some other language giving facilities for a wider circulation than the Dutch edition can attain, in order that the book's beneficent influences may no longer be confined to narrow limits, but may go out over the whole world.

We pray God and Mary, the Queen of the Apostles, to bless this work and make it thrive. Grateful to Your Reverence for the part you have taken in it, we gladly bless you, with your many brethren and students, and all the readers of this excellent book.

— William Cardinal van Rossum

Rome, Palace of the Propaganda,
February 13, 1919.

FELIX WESTERWOUDT MISSIONER IN BORNEO

I

AT HOME

Felix John Mary Westerwoudt was born in Amsterdam on the fourteenth of March, 1861, in a thoroughly Catholic family. His father, Felix Westerwoudt, LL.D., counted three religious among his sisters. His mother, Laurentia Bruynen, selected as godfather for the new-born child her uncle, John Cyprian Schermer, a missionary priest in Curaçao. This worthy missioner, who labored for Christ in the tropics for fifty long years, cooperated, no doubt, by his example and by his prayers in turning Felix's thoughts and desires to his own high calling.

Felix was the third of eight children, the youngest of whom became a nun.

Felix grew up under most favorable circumstances. The ample resources of his parents preserved him from any privations, and made it possible for his mother to devote herself entirely to the education of the children. His father was a busy man, a member of Parliament and officer

or director of many financial and charitable institutions, yet he always contrived to spare an hour or two daily for his dear ones. Felix's favorite friend and companion was his elder brother, William. The boys usually spent their free time together, in long walks or with practical lessons in carpentry, and the usefulness of the latter Felix as a missioner many times experienced.

Often Mr. Westerwoudt joined his sons at their recreations, devoting to them all the time that he could spare. He aroused in them an interest in plants and insects; he taught them to make small, unsightly photographs — for amateur photography was then in its infancy; he went fishing with them, or took them to visit interesting places in and around the city. Although slender and pale, Felix was well and strongly built and delighted in out-door sports, in many of which he excelled. Whatever might come to him in later years, his youth was a happy one and helped to lay the foundations of that never-failing cheerfulness that was one of his most striking characteristics.

As a child, Felix was sometimes irritable and hot-tempered. On one occasion, having been placed in a room by himself as a punishment, he smashed a pane of glass with his fist to cool his temper. Jealousy, too, occasionally had its way

with him. Once, at a children's party, he stubbornly refused to join in a race, and when his father insisted on knowing the reason, he replied: "If I lose, I shall cry. And I do not want to do that." But no one ever knew him to be guilty of a deceitful, false, or disloyal act. He was a lively, pleasing, playful boy, full of innocent gaiety, ready for a prank at any time, and a favorite alike with his fellow pupils and his teachers.

From seven to thirteen, Felix was at a private school for Catholic boys of comfortable means. The principal bore testimony, thirty years later, that Felix was his best and dearest pupil and was beloved by all. When he was thirteen, his schoolmates elected him to represent them on an occasion when all the schools of Holland were uniting to present a token of homage to the King. This was in 1874, at the silver jubilee of King William III. Later Felix delivered an address to the King at the palace, in the name of all the youth of the kingdom.

When Felix was eleven years old his vocation to the priesthood was made evident to him, on the day when he made his First Holy Communion. His mother, who had had a large share in the careful preparation, rejoiced to see that her boy longed for the great day. When it came, it brought him All — and asked all in re-

turn. Jesus gave Himself wholly to the innocent child in that first embrace, but asked in return a total surrender of soul and body.

The next day Felix told his mother that he wished to become a priest, that he believed it to be his vocation. The mother's heart was thrilled. Her son, her child, a priest of God! Some day, in the far-off future, the fair head that she loved so well, crowned with the halo of the holy priesthood! She shared the good news with her husband, who rejoiced with her. But both parents decided that it was incumbent upon them to seriously test the vocation of their son. They advised him to make himself worthy of so high a calling by ardent prayer and good behavior, and they forbade him to speak of it for the next few years, excepting with his confessor.

In no way disclosing his high aspirations, the boy took up again his school life with sufficient diligence and punctuality to content his superiors in every way. And all the time he remained the gay youngster, full of fun and innocent pranks, the favorite of his school, the joy of his home. When he had finished his course at the elementary school, his father, on the advice of wise counsellors, sent him to the High School at Amsterdam, but his vocation was equal to this test, also. The father, puzzled at first by the easy-going cheerfulness and contentment of the

lad, asked his wife: "Do you believe that Felix is still thinking of becoming a priest?"

The mother's eye, however, saw rightly; the mother's heart did not err. "Oh, undoubtedly!" she replied.

And indeed, before long, the high-school boy came rushing down the stairs, as was his wont, and knocked at the door of his father's study. Going straight to the point, he said: "Father, I wish to tell you that my desire of becoming a priest has changed in no way. Is it not time now to make arrangements?"

Thus it became evident to his father that there was question of something more than a childish fancy, and that henceforward nothing would stand in the way of his son's aspiration. Felix had finished the two lower classes at the High School and had reached his fifteenth year. After the summer holidays of the year 1876, he entered the diocesan preparatory seminary, "Hageveld", near Leyden. His heart's desire was no longer to remain hidden within him; henceforth everybody was free to know: he wished to become a priest.

II

AT THE SEMINARY

At length Felix was in the Seminary. At the beginning he had to apply himself principally to the profane sciences. But gradually the higher studies of dogmatic and moral theology came to the front, and soon they required all his attention.

How often in the first years, while the torch of mere human knowledge was being lighted in him, did the well-chosen words of his priest-teachers unfold to him the treasures of divine grace! Great was the change from the High School, where nothing spoke to him of God, where nearly all his fellow-students were either Protestants or young unbelievers, to this nursery of levites, where everyone's ideals were raised to a divine height, albeit not always fully realized.

What Felix had been at Elementary School and High School, he became at the Seminary: everybody's favorite. At his death, many years after, this was unanimously affirmed by all who had known him in those early days. Father Driessen, of pious memory, said: " Both at Hageveld and at the Major Seminary of Warmond,

Felix was loved by all for his kindheartedness. As long as I knew him, I never saw him in a bad temper or out of humor. He always was the same jovial, kind and friendly boy."

If at playtime a large strong hand placed a blow too vigorously on some sensitive spot, it was always forgiven, for the generous, boyish laughter of Felix Westerwoudt told that no offense was meant.

Although the boy was so generally liked, there was a time when his professors were not entirely satisfied with him. Pranks occurred too frequently, and the Rector felt obliged to inform the parents: "Felix ought to understand that seminary life requires also more exterior composure."

From this evil, however, came good. To Felix's mother it was the revelation that a future priest needs prayers no less — nay, even more — than the other children who remain exposed to the perils of the world. From that day, especially, Felix never lacked those prayers.

Only a few months after he had entered the Seminary, a great happiness awaited him. His Easter vacation was prolonged by his Superiors to enable him to accompany his parents and brother and sister to Rome. It was Pius IX, of glorious memory, whose hand was laid in blessing on the head of the young levite. In

the Eternal City Mr. Westerwoudt suggested that Felix return to Rome for the doctorate at the end of his Seminary course. Felix smiled, but did not answer decisively. Even then another offer had been made to him; his heart was turning to the toilsome life of the foreign missioner rather than the less arduous one of a Roman doctor, meritorious and noble though the latter be.

A vocation to the foreign missions was growing in him all through the days at the preparatory seminary at Hageveld. When he left to take up the theological course at Warmond, he felt with increasing certainty that God was calling him to something different from home-mission work. Two years later he wrote to his sister: "Indeed, for many years I have had the desire, once I am a priest, not to confine my labors to the diocese of Harlem, but to go where the laborers are so few. I have always wished to become a foreign missioner. I believe I am called to it."

During the retreat which followed his entrance into the Major Seminary of Warmond, he laid the matter before his confessor, seeking advice. The father advised him to keep praying for light. He bade Felix repeat constantly during the retreat the words of holy Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!"

Now, a picture of the child-prophet had been

familiar to Felix from earliest infancy. Often, indeed, from his little cot at home he had fixed his eyes on the ornament of the nursery: the picture of young Samuel, startled from his slumber, with the listening face, the big attentive eyes, the little hands piously folded! To Felix, too, God's answer came quickly. It grew ever clearer, till, at the close of the retreat, he was cheerfully and most firmly resolved to work for souls in the field afar.

He decided to offer himself for the foreign missions after ordination, and consequently went on with the regular course at Warmond, pursuing his theological studies and following the exercises with the other seminarians. Although Felix did not mention his own hopes, he often spoke of the missionary life and all connected with it so warmly that some of his friends came to suspect his heart's desire. With one in particular these conversations grew so enthusiastic that both young men began to fear they would impede a clear view of their respective vocations. Not wishing to unduly influence each other in the choice of the apostolic vocation, they generously decided to sacrifice the pleasure of these talks, so that no voice from without might deaden that of God. Felix was the first to see his course clearly; more than a year later his friend followed.

After two years at Warmond, Felix heard at his own home a conversation which caused him to change his plans. Mr. Westerwoudt — who knew nothing of his son's missionary aspirations — defended the opinion that, for a future missioner, it was desirable to secure in time an adequate preparation at an appropriate institution. Felix took no part in the conversation, but felt that he had heard the voice of Providence. Accordingly, when the guests had departed, he went to his father and asked to be dealt with as the father had advocated.

"Poor father!" a member of the family wrote later, "at that moment a sword pierced his heart. He knew then that the days when he would have his dear son with him were numbered. But no difficulties were raised, no obstructions put in the way, no postponement asked for or advised. Nay more, Felix could testify in after years, 'Father was continually of assistance to me'."

Such assistance meant more in Felix's youth than it would now. Today Holland has many missionary institutions, and anyone wishing to try out his missionary vocation may apply in person and talk over his problems with the missioners themselves, submitting himself and his vocation to their judgment. But in 1883, a secular priest feeling a call to the missions had no such clear road before him. Occasionally a priest left for

the United States to undertake parish work there. One heard sometimes of the Norwegian mission, or the African missions, or the works of the Paris Foreign Mission Society, but there was no actual intercourse. The work of the Mongolian mission, directed by the Scheut Fathers in Belgium, was a little better known, but only in the southern part of Holland. A few pioneers had crossed over to England, to Saint Joseph's Foreign Mission Seminary at Mill Hill, and Mr. Westerwoudt was advised that Saint Joseph's offered the only opportunity for a secular priest to reach the mission goal.

In the spring of 1883 Felix had an interview with his Bishop, who received him most kindly, made short work of all hindrances, and gave him full liberty to go where God called him. Should he ever repent of the step, the Bishop declared he would receive him back into the diocese with open arms. With this warm support and the cordial consent of his family, Felix crossed the Channel and began his actual mission preparation at Saint Joseph's.

III

MILL HILL

CARDINAL VAUGHAN had founded Saint Joseph's Society for Foreign Missions and its College at Mill Hill in 1866, when he was still a young priest in his early thirties. In 1871 it had sent out its first graduates to work in the negro settlements around American cities. In 1875 the Vicariate of Madras in India had been confided to it, followed in 1881 by North Borneo with Labuan and Sarawak, and later by Kashmir and Kafiristan.

Hardly had the young Society been established when, by the election of its founder to the episcopal see of Salford, its strongest support seemed to be taken away. However, by permission of the Holy See, Bishop Vaughan was allowed to continue the direction of his dear Society, a rector being appointed to act in his name. Canon Benoit, a saintly priest filled with zeal for the missions, and a kindly and prudent man, was the first called to this office, and under his wise direction Felix Westerwoudt was to be moulded to the missionary career.

Felix entered Saint Joseph's College in 1883, when he was twenty-two years old. Very many

of the students were of his own nationality. English vocations had been few at first, and the Society and College welcomed applicants from the Continent. Hollanders and Tyrolese responded in such large numbers that the Society was often reproached in those early days with not being English at all. "Very well," Dr. Vaughan would rejoin, "let the English apply in greater numbers; they will be received with open arms; but millions of souls on the brink of perdition cannot wait for the English."

It was a comfort to Felix, no doubt, to have so many Hollanders among his fellow-students. But he did not let that deter him from perfecting himself as much as possible in his new language. Nor did he take too hardly the gradual modifying of his national character. "More and more I begin to take after the English," he wrote home, "though the Dutch blood flows no less through my veins than before. We are constantly reminded that nationalities must be put aside now; that the missionary's fatherland is the Church of God." And again: "A few words in my mother tongue, since you prefer it. Do not think that I have forgotten it; but I try to forget it a little, or rather, to put some English in its stead; and that is why I write my letters in that language."

At first many things seemed strange to Felix. But he generously resolved to put aside all boy-

ishness, all pranks, and whatever might in any way conflict with the rule of the house. He had made the sacrifice, and he wished to make it in full. The daily manual labor period was a welcome change from study. It found our future missioner scrubbing the floor of the chapel; or, dressed in old clothes, standing knee-deep in mud to drain a pond; or pursuing with ardor the carpenter's or cobbler's trade. At hay-making time, when the students forsook their books for the pitchfork, none was happier or more active than he.

"As in every Seminary," he wrote to his family, "there is very little variety here. Every day is much the same. So I am glad they have appointed three-quarters of an hour each day for manual labor. It brings some little change; and besides, I rather like such work. I am parading just now a pair of boots which I myself provided with their solid soles, an operation which I intend shortly to repeat on another pair."

On the feast of Saint Joseph, in 1884, Felix received Sacred Tonsure and Minor Orders. The call to the subdiaconate followed sooner than usual, and Felix at first hesitated, not because of the step, but because of the unexpectedness of it. A letter written at the time reveals the hesitation and the subsequent decision:

"I did not in the least expect that this would take place before the holidays. But after consultation with Bishop Vaughan it was so arranged. Under these circumstances I think myself justified in taking this important step. Treading with God's help a path chosen for His sake, I believe that I may expect from Him the necessary strength to proceed and to reach the end."

Early in 1885 Felix was prepared for his approaching ordination to the diaconate, but he was not informed of the date of his ordination to the priesthood, and he had no inkling as to his future mission. Obedience was to be the watchword. It was not, however, contrary to the spirit of obedience to form wishes, and Felix, drawn towards Borneo, spoke of it frequently and mentioned it in his letters. The Right Reverend Father Jackson, Prefect Apostolic of Borneo, tells us concerning Felix:

When, in 1884, I came to Mill Hill for the General Chapter, I met Felix Westerwoudt, who was then a student. One day he begged me for a private interview and told me that, having embraced the missioner's career, he desired to give himself to it soul and body. He added that, having obtained all available information about our various missions, he had reached the conclusion that Borneo was the field where the richest harvest might be reaped. There was scope there for great suffering for God, and so

he longed to be sent to Borneo. If his superiors should grant his desire, he asked of me as a special favor to send him to a region where the harvest would be plentiful and where there would be much to suffer. I was favorably impressed by this interview and by what I had learned from others about him, so I asked our Superior to send him to Borneo immediately after his ordination to the priesthood. This was promised me.

By special dispensation, Felix was ordained priest the day after he had been ordained deacon. The ceremony took place in the Bishop's Chapel at Salford, on March 1, 1885, and Bishop Vaughan himself presided. Beside Felix knelt one of the best friends of his boyhood days, Albert Reyffert, who had followed the same path from the Seminary in Holland to Mill Hill.

For this day of days, Mr. Westerwoudt and his wife made the journey to Salford so that their son's happiness might be complete. They beheld their boy transformed into another Christ — *Sacerdos alter Christus* — and these holy parents knew joy such as the world cannot give. On the day following his ordination, they received Holy Communion from his hands. His mother wrote to a friend:

Rejoice with me, and bless our good God, for I am the mother of a priest!

An Exchange Market Near a Catholic Mission in North Borneo

Twenty-five years ago I wrote to you when this child was born. How well I recall my happiness. And yet what a great distance between the happiness then, and that which fills my soul now!

I am the mother of a priest. Those little hands which twenty-five years ago I kissed with maternal tenderness, those hands are consecrated now, those fingers have touched God! That intellect which received its light through me, how highly it has risen above my intellect by study and grace — and now it is consecrated. That body which I protected and cared for, over which I watched so many nights in cruel anxiety, has grown up tall and strong — and now it is consecrated. Servant of a priest soul, it will exhaust itself to lift up the sinner and to teach the ignorant. That heart, that pure heart, that trembled at each touch of the world, has been consecrated. Oh, I know my son's heart, I know that it contains treasures!

At the altar he was recollected in all his actions. I was quite near to him. I did not pray. Or rather, I do not know if it was praying; it was the ecstacy of a Christian mother. I only repeated: "Thanks, my God, thanks! That priest belonged to me. I have formed him. His soul kindled its light at my soul. Now he does not belong to me any longer, but to You alone. Keep him from the very shadow of sin! I love him, I honor him, I revere him — he is Your priest!"

At the moment of Holy Communion my child raised his hand in blessing over the head of his mother. When, with the ciborium in hand, he came to me, a

sob escaped him. What a moment, what a union! God, His Priest, and I! . . . Oh, I am happy! Whatever may come after this, do not pity me any more.

Yet they were the parents not only of a priest, but of a missioner, and the shadow of the cross was over their joy. Felix returned with them to spend his last vacation under their roof. Much of the time was occupied in visiting relatives and bidding farewell to friends. Then came the day of parting. On August 28, the future missioner said Mass for the last time in the village church of Teist, where his parents had their country home. All the relatives were present, and Felix gave to them their God, the Comforter of those who mourn.

At the breakfast that followed, the young priest was unable to raise his eyes from the table, fearing to behold the grief on the faces so dear to him. When the moment of departure arrived, he knelt to receive his parents' blessing and then held his own anointed hands in benediction over them. The flood-gates of their pent-up grief gave way at last, and poor Felix was obliged to leave hurriedly, for his own endurance was well-nigh spent. His heart was very human, and he cherished dearly the happiness he was forsaking for Christ. From Mill Hill he wrote later: "God has been very good to us.

You cannot know how I dreaded that day as something far beyond my strength. But everything went particularly well, thanks be to God! "

Soon after reaching Mill Hill, Felix learned that he was to sail from Trieste on October 1. His brother-in-law went to Mill Hill to represent the family at the departure ceremony. No one who has witnessed a departure ceremony can ever forget the spectacle. Pain and exaltation are so intimately interwoven that the impression defies analysis. Felix's departure ceremony took place on September 26. A farewell address was given by the Vicar-General of Madras. That experienced missioner did not attempt to make the way appear easy to the young men about to enter the field, but he presented the manifold difficulties and sufferings of the missioner in a manner which inflamed the zeal of his hearers. Then the departing missioners stood before the altar and the congregation came forward and kissed their feet. The significance of this solemn act is of great beauty, for it recalls the blessing of the prophet upon the missioners of future ages: " How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace, of him that sheweth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: Thy God shall reign! "

Preceded by the Crucifix, all set out in pro-

cession to the train. There the missioners gave a final blessing to the crowd, and Felix left Europe forever. Of those who had known and had loved him none would ever see him again, except the few who would be sent to fight on the same battle field. Father Reyffert, also, had been assigned to Borneo, and the ties of this holy friendship were to grow ever closer.

IV

THE JOURNEY

THE two missioners for Borneo sailed from Trieste on October 1. The boat was good but, as they were second-class passengers and the ship was crowded, they had to share their cabin with two strangers. This prevented them at first from saying Mass, but after a few days they became acquainted with three Jesuit Fathers, bound for Bombay, and said Mass in the cabin of these new friends.

Felix wrote to those at home the account of his adventures and impressions. He was keenly sensitive to the beauty of the changing scenes but they could not distract him from the goal on which his heart was set. Alexandria was the first real taste of Oriental life the missioners had. The crowded streets, the noise, the bright colors, the smells, were all new and rather confusing. Most of the passengers got off there, and conditions on the boat became better.

At Port Said the missioners visited the Franciscan Fathers, provided themselves with candles for Mass, and went to confession. The town did

not attract them, as it was even less clean than Alexandria. They went ashore once more at Aden and were able to secure Mass-wine. Then followed six days of open sea till, on Friday, October 23, Bombay loomed up in the distance. This was the destination of all the remaining passengers, except the two Borneo Fathers and one German. The Jesuits welcomed the missioners to their immense College. The Bishop of Bombay was likewise most hospitable. The city with its splendid harbor, its university, schools, shops and hotels, gave the impression of a great metropolis.

On October 29 the voyage was resumed. It had grown rather monotonous. The first stop was at Colombo, on the island of Ceylon. Here Felix and Father Reyffert stayed with the Oblate Fathers. At Penang they met a warm welcome from the Paris Foreign Mission Fathers, who conducted a large seminary for Chinese, Annamites, and other Asiatics. And so they experienced the Catholicity of Holy Mother Church, whose priests are united in a bond unaffected by considerations of nationality or locality.

Singapore was the last stopping place. "Though our lazy life had spoiled us," wrote Felix, "how glad we were to see the end of our journey!" They were taken ashore by a Father of the Paris Foreign Missions Society, whose

Procure was of great service to the Borneo missioners. The boat for Borneo left early the next morning, so they had but one day to make purchases, change money, and attend to the shipment of some goods previously ordered by the other Fathers.

The boat which took them over to Borneo was a good little vessel, but in rough weather she rolled more than the larger mail boat had done. After a journey of two days, on November 15 they distinguished from afar the coast of Borneo. The weather was fine and Felix was able to say Mass "on a Borneo boat gliding over a Borneo river". He offered it for the people of Borneo and for the Singhis in particular. "But you were not forgotten, either," he wrote to those at home, "you to whom I owe it, under God, that I am able to exercise my priestly duties in Borneo."

A disappointment awaited the travelers at Kuching. When they landed there, after a few hours on the river, there was no priest to greet them. A couple of Chinese school boys, shy and clumsy, had been sent to show the way. It was Sunday, and one of the missioners had gone to an out station, while the other was singing High Mass in Kuching's little church. So the newcomers entered the town, carrying bag and baggage, laden down by the heavy sacks of silver

coin obtained at Singapore for themselves and the other Fathers. Of course, they received a cordial welcome later, at Saint Joseph's Mission, but the loneliness of that first landing was a foreshadowing of the loneliness Borneo would hold for them.

The conversion of the part of Borneo allotted by Propaganda to the Mill Hill missioners was a gigantic task. They had charge of Labuan and North Borneo. Borneo, the second largest island in the world, is situated under the equator, so that the heat is tremendous and there are countless rainfalls. These conditions develop dense forests which cover the whole island. Seventy years ago it was absolutely impossible to penetrate into the northern part of Borneo. The coast was unsafe because of pirates, and in the interior the different tribes were always at war with one another. Head-hunting was still practised and the desire of the warriors to obtain as many enemies' heads as possible made permanent peace out of the question.

Then a rich young Englishman, Lieutenant Brooke, became friendly with the Rajah of Sarawak. This Rajah later grew weary of his position and offered it to Lieutenant Brooke. The singular offer was accepted, and the Englishman actually became Rajah Brooke of Sarawak. He was noble and humane of character and made it his first task to pacify the warring island tribes.

Later, with the help of some English cruisers, he did away with the coast pirates. The Catholic missioner could then start his labors in the interior with some chance of success.

In 1881 the first Mill Hill Fathers arrived in Borneo. The country was safe enough, but the missioners met great poverty. They lived just as the natives did, dwelling in the same rough huts. They explored the interior region, sailing in small boats on rivers abounding in rapids and crags, and journeying through wild forests and treacherous swamps. When Felix arrived in 1885, Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, was the head station of the mission. Felix described the town as larger and more civilized than he had anticipated. Trade was carried on by the intelligent Chinamen, while the Malays did no more than provide for their own simple wants in their scattered settlements along the river. The missioner worked mainly among the Chinese, for the Malays were such nomads that it was difficult to get a hold on them. There was a Protestant mission in Kuching. Somewhat farther away from the center of the town, about ten minutes' walk, stood the little Catholic church and mission school, which was then only a wooden structure. The Sisters' house was a quarter of an hour distant, but steps had already been taken for a new convent that would face the mission proper.

Father Jackson, Felix's Superior, was absent, so Felix remained at Kuching until after Christmas. This gave him a chance to observe the work and methods of his experienced fellow priests, and to study the language a little. He amused himself with the school boys, who were nearly all Chinese urchins, but he felt himself drawn towards the uncivilized Dyaks among whom he was to labor. He paid two visits to his future mission; but his letters home, describing these visits, were very brief. He wished to spare his loved ones details which he feared might alarm them about his future lot.

After Christmas he said good-bye to the brethren, especially to his friend and companion, Father Reyffert, who was to take over the mission at Kanowit. Then Felix set out to become a shepherd of souls.

V

THE DYAKS

No souls were ever hidden under a more repulsive exterior than those for whose salvation Felix was now to labor. But had he not asked for the mission that promised greatest suffering? Would disillusionment set in at the flagging of the first fervor? Could he endure throughout the lonely years, face to face with the most sordid reality of pain and apparent failure? He did endure, because his desire for suffering had undoubtedly been inspired by God. Father Jackson, Felix's Superior, was surely very strongly convinced of God's special help, when he sent the newly-ordained young priest to Singhi's lonely heights. God rewarded that trust.

The Singhi is a solitary and very steep mountain, two thousand feet high, about a day's journey from Kuching. Half way up is a plateau on which dwelt some five thousand land Dyaks. About fifteen hundred of these were known on Felix's arrival. They lived scattered over seven or eight campongs, or settlements, all under separate chiefs, one of whom, the Oran-Kaya, was the head of all the Singhi Dyaks. These cam-

pongs were very close together, but they remained invisible up to the last moment on account of the dense surrounding foliage.

The villages of the Sea-Dyaks consisted of one large house accommodating all the families. This was not the case with the Singhi campongs. The latter were composed of many small dwellings, but even these sheltered several households. The huts were raised on poles and made of bamboo and palm leaves. There were a covered space and an open veranda with six or seven doors indicating different apartments. There were low partitions within, and neighbors overlooked one another's family affairs. The floor consisted of tree trunks, arranged to leave large gaps through which refuse could be thrown to the space beneath the hut. The entrance ladder was a pole with foot-holds cut in it at intervals. The huts were usually built in uniform style, but in each campong there was one separate round hut for the older boys. This boys' hut was decorated with skulls, the trophies of bygone wars.

All who visited the Singhi were repelled by its nauseating atmosphere. The paths between the huts were filthy. They were covered with mud, rotting cocoanut shells, and all sorts of refuse. Through them, as well as through the indescribably unclean heaps beneath the huts, a multitude of pigs rummaged at liberty. It will be easily

understood that diseases, more particularly those of the skin, abounded on the Singhi. An immoral life and the long custom of close intermarrying helped on the evil; while rice, which was almost their only food, is not sufficient in itself for the building of a healthy body.

Father Jackson described the Singhi Dyaks as the most untidy, repulsive, and intractable people he had met, in Borneo or anywhere else. There was not one Christian in the whole tribe; in fact, there was scarcely one individual worthy of the name of man. Many of them were covered with horrible scurvy. They were extremely poor, and yet proud and arrogant. The tribal chief, the Oran-Kaya, was particularly unmanageable, and he was a ruler of great power and influence.

The Singhis were not brave and warlike, like other Dyaks. They were timorous, and on that account they had settled on the mountain, which afforded a safe shelter against their enemies. Their plateau was all but inaccessible, for its side was even more precipitous than the rest of this very steep mountain. The choice of a mission station had fallen on this poor tribe because they were never long absent from their village, and never ventured far. The other tribes led a more nomadic life, which constituted an almost unsurmountable obstacle for the missioner.

The Dyaks were short, always below medium height. Felix towered over them so much that they measured his height with a stick. Their dress was of the most primitive kind. The men wore a long piece of linen, wound several times round the waist, the ends hanging down in front and at the back. Usually it was dark blue mixed with red. At work it was replaced by one of less value, of a yellow color and made of the bark of trees. Some of the village notables ornamented the ends of the cloth with Chinese, English, and Dutch coins. Those who had worked at Kuching sometimes donned trousers and jacket, but this was the exception. They wore their hair short, usually winding a gaudy red scarf very adroitly around the head.

On the left side the men wore a large knife which was used for cutting wood and for all manner of work. On the right they carried a short but thick bamboo stick, sometimes carved, in which they kept Dyak dainties, such as betel-nut, sirih, gambier, and a kind of lime, all of which were mixed together for chewing purposes. As may well be imagined, chewing this red concoction did not add to cleanliness. With the bamboo stick was a small knife used only for cutting the betel-nut. Really fine workmanship was often found on the sheaths of these knives.

The women, the girls, and the boys wore ear-

rings made of pieces of wood or brass wire. Sometimes the boys had brass or wooden bracelets around the wrists or the upper part of their arms, and some of them had their teeth ground to a point. The garment of the women was an ornamented petticoat reaching to the knees. Their hair was long and uncovered, only the old women occasionally wearing a cap made of leaves. The girls wore short petticoats also, but fastened around the waist by bamboo straps, trimmed with a number of alternating rings of brass and of red colored rattan. The upper part of the body was encased in a kind of bark cloth, covered with small projecting rods. This was extremely awkward, particularly when the wearers were at work. When the light canoes were overturned in the river, less encumbered folk could swim to safety, but the poor Dyak maiden in her heavy harness soon sank.

Polygamy was not a custom of the Dyaks, but divorce was of daily occurrence and subsequent marriage was tolerated. The Dyaks had some notion of a higher Being, whose friendship they must cultivate. But they considered the friendship of the numerous evil spirits far more important, for otherwise the latter would send sickness and adversity.

They burned their corpses and believed that they were afterwards changed into rain. After a

death, the survivors smashed up everything in the hut, simulating great rage. They laid the corpse with uncovered face in a corner of the hut, tied his two big toes together, and placed beside him everything that had been of use to him during life, especially the skulls of his enemies. Then the cremator led the procession, carrying a burning torch. After him came a man bearing the corpse on his back; then those carrying fire-wood; and, at the rear of the procession, the male and female relatives. There were several spots set aside for cremation, and for the most part they were so near to the campongs that the horrible stench could easily penetrate within. Conditions were worse when the wood was damp and did not burn properly, or when the cremator left his work half finished. It was not uncommon to see a dog or a pig enter the campongs with a half charred arm or leg. Babies were not burned, but hung in a basket on a tree near the crematories, or placed in the undergrowth to be devoured by birds, swine, or wild beasts, — a ghastly spectacle.

The Dyaks did not fully believe in immortality, but they thought that some sort of soul survived death and roamed about. Thus, they related that one or another had been turned into a pig or a bear, had visited the sun, moon or stars, had generated birds, or had taken the form of a cocoanut. There was a survival of primeval tra-

THE ELEVATED DYAK HUTS (*See page 28*)

dition among them, as among so many other peoples, but in a maimed form. In their genealogy Adam and Eve come first under the names of Adam and Haeva. The only picture in the catechism which awoke some interest in them was that of the first human couple, for they looked upon them as their own ancestors. The story of the deluge, also, was known to them. Their religion proper was inseparable from their material wants. Everything in it related to abundant rice crops and protection from sickness. As means to this end, they had many festivities and wore charms such as shells, the teeth of crocodiles and of bears, and various stones, all of which were greatly treasured. The missioner's task was to transform all these superstitions into Christian feasts and ceremonies.

The principal feast, the Dyak New Year, occurred in May or June, after the rice harvest. It lasted several days. On the first day large quantities of rice mixed with cocoanut were prepared, and a great many pigs and hens were killed. These were eaten at the feast dinner on the following day, together with decayed fish many weeks old, and a kind of strong liquor drawn from a certain palm tree. A fair portion of each article of food was set aside for the good and evil spirits. Furthermore, everything which the Dyak himself ate, such as bananas, gambier,

and so forth, was presented to the Supreme Being on a kind of altar. Towards evening the priestesses made their offerings. After much noise and confusion, they fell into a sort of trance, during which the Supreme Being was supposed to speak to them. Then they received rice and stones from heaven in an invisible shower, and these they distributed among the crowd. The succeeding days were devoted mainly to the merry-makings of the youth of the tribe, which took the form chiefly of very strange dances. Felix was present only once at such a performance; he declined later invitations, to show his disapproval.

The temperature was very changeable, with extremes of heat and cold. The cool nights were pleasant, but when a thunderstorm swept its wind and rain over the mountain, even the palm-leaf huts were cold abodes. The Singhi campong was reduced to a slough during the rainy season. At such times the few belongings of the missioner were almost spoiled by dampness. But the combination of heat and humidity was very favorable to vegetation. The whole mountain was covered with colossal trees, most of which bore fruit. Fantastically shaped creepers abounded, of the thickness of a tree, with long air-roots hanging to the ground, and these proved a real obstacle to the missioner on his journeys. There were not many flowers, but the precious orchid

and the passion-flower thrived. Ferns were numerous and some grew to a great height. They also were hindrances in the path of the traveler and their sharp edges often cut legs and face.

A tree whose fruit was much relished by the natives was the lofty durian. Despite its repulsive odor, Felix declared that he relished the fruit. It was somewhat larger than a baby's head, and was divided within into five cells, the only edible part of which was the pulp surrounding the seeds. Felix described the taste as that of a mixture of thick cream, sugar, and onions. No one was allowed to pick the fruit from the enormous tree, so, during the season, men, women and children waited for hours, and even for days, until a fruit ripened and fell. The right of the most agile was never disputed. During this period, as during the harvest, the missioner was forced to remain inactive, for no one had time to receive him.

The Chinese, who were not afraid to work, made use of cocoanuts, bananas, and the magnificent pineapples. They also laid out, in the neighborhood of the Singhi and elsewhere, plantations of sago, sirih, and gambier, from the sap of which they manufactured dyes. Coffee and tea were cultivated by some Europeans, as well as by the Chinese, and coffee-growing, which does not require too much strenuous labor, was taken

up later by Felix as a means of keeping his Christians together.

The forests were full of deer. Boars were also met with, and occasionally a small species of bear and the tiger-cat. There were, of course, many varieties of monkeys. Several of these animals would be edible were it not for the heat, which made it impossible to keep meat any length of time. But Dyaks were not particular and enjoyed meat even in an advanced state of decay. The same was true of fish; when its odor alone was enough to drive away a European, the Dyak would not scruple to offer it to his guest. Pigs were considered sacred and eaten only at feasts and during illness. On account of the filth which was their chief nourishment, their meat had a taste which a European could not tolerate. The Dyaks raised hens, and the eggs were a welcome addition to the rice menu.

A large lizard, three feet in length and very dangerous, was common. A smaller kind, quite harmless, would creep over the table during meals. Snakes were numerous and snake flesh was considered a dainty.

The birds of Borneo's forests had gaudy plumage, but their songs were not sweet like those of the unsightly nightingale or the blackbird. Borneo simply swarmed with insects. The most troublesome of these were the scorpion and the

large milleped. There were enormous spiders, wasps, mosquitoes, beetles, and locusts. At night the shrill note of the locust indicated the hour pretty accurately. The forest was often so dense that the darkness would mislead the traveler, and it would be impossible to take counsel from the sun; but the buzzing, chirping, or whistling, at different times, of some insect or another, would tell the time to the half-hour precisely. Enormous moths, beautifully coloured, soon tempted Felix to try his hand at stuffing them. But the white ants destroyed his work within a few hours time.

Such are, roughly sketched, the surroundings of the remaining years of Felix's life.

VI

OPENING OF THE SINGHI MISSION

It was only a few days' journey to Felix's mission, but difficulty is not always measured by time. On his first visit Felix and the priests who accompanied him started overnight. Two Malay rowers pulled them down the Sarawak river. They tried to snatch a little sleep, but without moving, for fear of upsetting the frail skiff. They reached the mooring at dawn, where the path to the Singhi starts. There they halted for their morning meal, consisting of rice and dried fish. On this occasion their fingers did the work for which nature intended them. One of the Fathers, on seeing Felix relish the unsavory meal, said: "This raises you at least twenty-five dollars in our estimation!"

Between the mooring and the foot of the mountain there were several swamps, so the Fathers provided themselves with stout sticks. A Dyak carried their few belongings. The heat was particularly unbearable that day. The missioners sometimes sank up to the knee in mud. Needless to say, they were obliged to remove their shoes and stockings. Dyak bridges were of

a primitive nature, usually consisting of a single bamboo stick without any railing. As there were several little rivers on the way, Felix wondered how he managed to avoid a serious fall. "But", he added, "once you are wet, what does it matter whether it is above or below the knee?" Their clothes and hands were torn by the dense undergrowth before they reached the base of the Singhi, where they halted for awhile.

At first the path was overshadowed by tall fruit trees which covered almost the whole slope. The steep parts consisted practically of sheer rock. Sometimes they climbed by means of bamboo ladders. In other places trees did the duty of ladders; these were cut out, at intervals of twenty inches, thus affording a support for the toes. This mode of climbing was very perilous, and it inclined one to dizziness. The continual listing of the climber's own weight was extraordinarily wearisome. Carrying baggage under such conditions seemed well nigh impossible. The Dyaks were very clever in the carrying of weights on their heads, but many things of larger dimensions were of necessity left behind. Before the campongs were reached, a beautiful cascade refreshed the travelers. All along the way they could drink of the milk of the cocoanut, which grew profusely.

On Felix's first visit the site for a future dwell-

ing was selected, and the chief was informed of the white man's plan to return and live amongst them. He made no objection, and they gave him seven dollars and a few presents to start the building of a hut. In honor of the occasion he had donned a pair of trousers, and he added a finishing touch to his attire by crowning himself with a basket of glass beads which had been presented to him as a gift for his wife. The second time that Felix visited the Singhi he stayed five days, to direct the building of his house. On December 29 it was ready. The new mission was then named for Saint John Baptist. Saint John never had the consolation of seeing Jesus reign over His own; Felix, too, prepared the way in suffering and loneliness, and died before Christ's truth could be said to rule over the Singhi.

We may only dimly guess what passed through the heart of the young apostle when he found himself alone amongst the Singhi Dyaks, he who was by nature lively and gay. He never betrayed the secret of his sufferings, but as he was about to start for his mission he wrote: "I count now more than ever on your prayers; for myself, that I may be brave and cheerful, a special grace much needed in my future solitude amongst such a people; and for them, that God may prepare their hearts for our holy Faith."

The Dyaks were much astounded when Felix took up his abode under his roof of palm-leaves; they could not guess his motive for wishing to live with them. He had had his house built so as to face the precipice. On the other side he was within two minutes' walk of the chief's hut, and almost as near to the rest of the campong. The front of the hut gave him a magnificent outlook on miles and miles of country, but on the other sides it was screened in by heavy foliage. It had been erected in Dyak fashion, raised above the ground and supported by poles, or rather, bamboo sticks. This left a space underneath, where the missioner could keep hens. A tree-trunk led to the door of split bamboo reeds.

The first room served as kitchen. A couple of stones covering a square space of sand were the stove, and a few little pots and pans completed the illusion. A second door opened on to the sitting-room, which measured twenty feet in perimeter. Part of this was walled off and did duty as bed-room and chapel. The floor was made of bamboo, covered with split bamboo-reeds. The walls and the roof were of sago palm leaves. A couple of Dyak mats were the only carpet. The furniture consisted of a large stone pot of rice, three hand-bags which also did duty as linen-presses, and two benches. One of these benches ran along the whole length

of the house and took the place of a book-case. No one was to be admitted into this little sanctum; it was the only nook where the missioner could enjoy a little privacy and, moreover, it was his Holy of Holies, with its little portable altar.

For Felix was not entirely alone in his loneliness. He could never have endured his exile among the Dyaks had it not been for the daily visit of the Greatest of all friends, the Friend for Whom he had left all things and learned to glory in the Cross. A few months after his arrival, Father Westerwoudt announced exultantly that his hut was to be considerably enlarged. A little chapel was to be added, separate from his bed-room, where he intended also to store all his "preciosa". Most of the so-called articles had been left at Kuching, on account of the difficulty of bringing them up the mountain. In spite of all his efforts, the hut was not strongly built and in June, 1887, only a year and a half later, Felix complained that it was getting rickety all over.

Felix tried very hard to cultivate the small plot of ground around his hut. He sowed and planted, but, as the soil was very stony, it was almost impossible to find a suitable spot, and the numerous rainfalls, streaming down the mountain, washed away the seeds. He sowed onions, beets, and carrots, which might have been a

pleasant addition to his wretched stock, but the seeds were always carried away by the rains. For years his food consisted of dried fish, rice with a few wild herbs, cocoanuts or bananas, and sometimes a bit of boar, deer, or bear meat, generally in a state of decay. Tea was his usual drink, varied only by cocoanut milk and by a cool draught from the waterfall. Better food he never asked for, and when it was sent him it was left untouched and put aside for one or another of his fellow priests, on their visits to the Singhi.

Before long he went barefoot like the Dyaks. Shoes and stocking were a hindrance on swampy ground and especially when brooks and rivers were to be waded. So he was always barefoot except at Holy Mass. In later years he experienced the painful consequences of walking through all kinds of filth, and he again wore shoes. But they annoyed him. Friends at home had sent him some wooden clogs and he sometimes found those useful. This was especially the case when he walked between the huts, where the mud had the effect of a mustard plaster and burned the skin from the soles of the feet. His outfit consisted of a thin black cassock, a large white sun-hat, a stout stick, and the indispensable knife to clear his way. He was very scrupulous about the wearing of his red sash, the

livery of his Society, which puts its members in mind that they should be in constant readiness to shed their blood for Christ.

As soon as he was somewhat settled, he followed as punctually as possible all the points of the Mill Hill rule. During the thirteen years he passed in Borneo he never omitted a yearly retreat of ten days, followed by a general confession. He was deeply convinced that a time of recollection and care for his own spiritual life was imperative after his continual toiling and plodding among the Singhis. The holy fear of Saint Paul was ever before him, — lest, having preached to others, he should himself become a castaway.

VII

TRIALS

When Father Westerwoudt went to live with his Singhi Dyaks he did not know a word of their language. The missioner who had first awakened interest in this tribe and had visited them several times, was in Europe. Felix was, moreover, unable to form a notion of their character and customs by comparison with other tribes, as an older missioner could have done. One of the chief virtues ascribed to Felix by his brethren was that of prudence. He was extremely fearful of making a mistake in the selection of his means at the very outset of his life's work. So, at the beginning, he was like a man feeling his way in the dark.

"Even now," he wrote on the second of March, 1886, "everything is as unsettled as can be." What he called a school looked more like a grocer's shop with its owner waiting for customers from morning until night.

Whatever vices the Dyaks may have had, it cannot be denied that they were honest and hospitable. Since their own doors were never

closed, they expected that the priest would be equally accessible to everyone at all times. He was rarely left alone for one minute. Many were drawn to Father Westerwoudt's hut by curiosity. They made themselves comfortable and watched all his actions for hours at a stretch. He was often forced to go outside in order to have a chance to say his breviary. But the missioner must endure this painful lack of privacy, for free access to his house is the first step to friendly intercourse.

Some of the Dyak visitors amused themselves with toys or looked at pictures from the illustrated paper. To Felix's surprise, they always held them upside down. They contented themselves with such explanations as: *this is a horse, this is a man, this is a house*, and did not ask for more. They were greatly impressed by the workings of a magnet which, in their primitive way of speaking, they called "the courageous iron". An old Dyak asked Felix to give a piece of it to his dog, as the animal was not brave enough for boar hunting. He was satisfied, however, when permission was granted to have his dog lick the iron.

Sometimes Father Westerwoudt showed them catechism pictures, but these did not arouse any interest. His hearers did, it is true, express the opinion that heaven must be better than hell, for

in the former people wear clothes, but not in the latter. When the missioner showed them the image of the Crucified Saviour, or when he spoke of things pertaining to the soul, some burst into loud laughter, others left the hut; no one lent a willing ear. On those occasions Father Westerwoudt's heart shrank with pain and he thought: "Not yet, not yet. I must first make myself loved by them."

At Kuching he had been advised to master as much medical knowledge as possible. Dyak medicine men make use of so many superstitious practices that no Christian could have recourse to them; so it was absolutely imperative that the missioner should know how to doctor his native Christians. Father Westerwoudt regretted that he had not acquired the fundamentals of medicine when he was in Europe. He set himself to become the savior of their poor sick bodies as well as of their souls, and did for them all that energy and charity could achieve. Another means by which he sought to win them was interest manifested in all their temporal concerns. He followed them to their rice-fields, and incidentally, by inquiring into every particular, he became acquainted with their many superstitions.

His favorite means, however, was to get the boys together at his house. The older ones, who lived together in one hut, were soon perverted

and boys of fourteen and fifteen were already depraved. Felix devoted himself more especially to the younger ones and made every effort to win their affections. They were willing enough to play and joke with him, and they executed their strange dances or performed the most intricate gymnastic feats without any urging. But when it came to learning anything, the dusky urchins fled. After a few months they were less shy of him than at first, when they used to scurry away like frightened rats at the sight of the tall white man in his black dress.

At first he could not succeed in getting any boys to live with him. They came and went as they chose, and it was long before he could exercise any real influence over them. Father Jackson, his Superior, did not greatly favor the founding of a school, as he thought it would leave too little time for visiting the grown-ups. Felix yielded to his Superior's wishes, as always, but he remained convinced of the urgent necessity of a school. Later on, by making the most of his time and strength, he was able to have his school without neglecting the older folks.

He gradually established a rule of life for himself and for his people. He had stated hours for prayer, for meals, for school, and for visits. Six months later, in August, 1886, he wrote: "You ask whether I am making progress, but the

question of success or no success does not even come in yet." The germination of the seed was very slow. But Felix never wavered. He strove more and more to become like his flock. Like his Divine Master, he became "like one of them in all things save sin". When Father Dunn was made Superior of the Mill Hill Borneo mission, Felix said of him: "He loves the natives and knows how to share their life and yet shun familiarity. He might be called a Dyak gentleman." These identical words describe Father Westerwoudt himself.

Not only was success as yet out the question, but difficulties multiplied rapidly. It was evident that Satan would put up a mighty struggle to maintain his kingdom. The devil's allies were powerful in a place where such morals and habits prevailed. But light had already pierced this kingdom and the prince of darkness was destined to flee before it. Felix himself was deeply convinced of this. He would often repeat that the Holy Sacrifice was not celebrated daily in vain on the Singhi. Even if he did not, himself, live to see the result of his labors, the Mass would undoubtedly call down God's mercy on this poor pagan people and they would be converted in the Master's good time.

At first most of the natives thought that Felix was an agent of the Rajah and that he would be

recalled before long. When they understood that he had come to stay many remained indifferent, but others began to manifest hostility. Among the latter were the chief and his advisers, and the priests and priestesses. The chief hardly ever visited the white man, and thwarted him whenever he could. He embittered Father Westerwoudt's life for many years until at length his own subjects grew weary of him and complained to the Rajah, who had the chief deposed and arrested.

In 1887 forty-two huts of the Singhi campong were destroyed by fire. The bamboo and dried sago leaves of which they were made flared up like paper, and in less than an hour the howling, yelling, wailing population saw their homes reduced to ashes. The chief was away at the time with one of his principal subordinates. When they returned, their fury knew no bounds. They brandished their swords and threatened to kill anyone who should venture to approach; then, of a sudden, they sat down in front of the ashes of their huts and wept like children. It seems that many ascribed the disaster to the presence of the Christian priest. Yet Felix risked his life in the work of rescue, and, in addition to fighting the flames, he gave pecuniary aid to the homeless.

When the Dyaks planted their rice, they observed all sorts of superstitious rites. Felix

ENEMIES' SKULLS, PRESERVED AS HUT DECORATIONS (*See page 56*)

had acquired a good deal of influence over a certain man and he obtained leave to bless his field according to Christian rites. He planted a wooden cross where the Dyaks were wont to erect the altar of an idol. There was great expectation among the natives, for many had promised to study the Christian faith if the harvest succeeded. It failed, and it was even rumored that deer had eaten away the plants at the very foot of the cross. Felix wrote to the home-land: "God will turn this to good in His own way."

The sorest trial to the missioner was the impossibility of approaching the sick. When a Dyak fell ill he was placed under the care of the priests and priestesses. Various superstitious rites were performed, according to the seriousness of the malady. The most common of these was for the priestesses to chew gambier, betel and tobacco, and to spit on the spot where they imagined the disorder to be located. If the patient grew worse, they killed a hen and cooked it, together with some rice. They ate most of this themselves, though a certain portion was set aside for the spirits. Then they made a pretense of removing from the patient's body various objects which were supposed to have lodged there and caused mischief. When all these measures had been taken, the hut was darkened for a fortnight and the patient forbidden to go out or to allow

anyone to approach him. In case of mortal illness, these practices were multiplied. Imaginary incisions were made, stones and like objects supposed to be removed from the body, a pig killed, a dog beaten to death against the door post, and the evil spirit given opportunity to leave in a small boat.

Thus Father Westerwoudt could not approach the little ones to baptize them at the hour of death; he could not enlighten the men and women who had shown some good will. His heart must have been sad, indeed, as he stood at the closed door and longed to minister to the departing soul and wrest it from the devil. At first he found it difficult to take timely measures, for he knew too little of the nature and symptoms of illnesses. Sometimes, when he did succeed in baptizing infants, they recovered. Only once was he able to send to heaven a little intercessor.

Smallpox attacked the Singhi in 1890. The epidemic spread gradually, so that Felix was able to follow up the individual cases. At first he was allowed to approach several children. "The devil", he wrote later, "has probably become jealous, for now I am forbidden entrance nearly everywhere. Even offerings of sugar for the sick, or paraffin for night use, are no longer sufficient bribes. Fifty children have died already and I have baptized only fifteen."

VIII

DYAK FEAST DAYS

In 1888 a cholera epidemic ravaged all Borneo. The Singhi did not suffer much from the plague, but it was the occasion of a great festival, at which Felix was present, and which he afterwards described. The festival was for the purpose of warding off the cholera. It was a revival of old tribal ceremonies and the description of it shows clearly what a miracle of grace was needed to make Christians of those poor people.

The opening day of the festival was August 26. Great preparations had been made. The fate of four pigs and a few hens had been solemnly debated by the chief and the elders. The younger men were kept busy making a path to the summit of the mountain and preparing six huts near a very old giant tree, held sacred by the tribe. Early in the morning the chief was borne on the shoulders of a few subjects to the sacred tree, where a throne of bamboo and palm leaves had been prepared. With him were brought the skeleton heads of a deer, a tiger, a

crocodile, and a bird. All the young people who felt so inclined were allowed to take an oath, while touching these bones, that they would never eat venison, chicken, or eggs again, — a strange and rather stringent act of self-denial. Three pigs were killed and each family received a part.

A procession, headed by representatives of the chief, who for two days must not leave his sacred tree, then started out for the place of sacrifice. Two priests were followed by about twenty priestesses, decked out with beads and the teeth of animals. Then followed a native with the fourth pig, another with a hen, and a third with a burning torch. Behind them came the notables, and then the remainder of the tribe, together with all the children. The road was a difficult one, an hour's journey over tree-trunks and boulders, up a steep slope.

At last the gruesome spot was reached. It was marked by thirteen little idols, statues of different Oran-Kayas (chiefs). They were made of wood and measured about one foot in height. The reigning chief was not allowed to erect a new statue, but was expected to renovate that of his predecessor. This was done by his son, who polished the statue for about half an hour with some rice and a piece of pigskin. All the priestesses, young and old, sang their sacred hymns which, though wailing and monotonous,

were not without harmony. A hen was killed and roasted over the fire; the fourth pig, after many mysterious passes with a spear, was pierced and only its heart was prepared. Then the singing began anew, accompanied by the beating of gongs and cymbals. The neck-bone of the pig and some bits of copper wire, which represented gold, were buried close to the idols, to obtain a cool and prosperous year. These ceremonies took about three hours, after which the party returned to the chief.

Then every one brought rice and fire-wood and prepared the midday meal, squatting near the enormous tree. The night and the following day were passed in merrymaking. On the evening of the second day, the chief was carried home in the same way as he had come. Thirty or forty men set out on a boar-hunt on the morning of the third day. They returned with only five little ones. On the fourth day they tried their luck again, but in vain.

Head-hunting was no longer allowed under the reigning Rajah, but, on the fifth day of the festival, forty men and youths armed themselves with swords and spears and set out on an imaginary head hunt. They returned the next afternoon and were received with great rejoicings by the whole village. In the middle of the campong a mat was spread, and they deposited there

the basket which was supposed to contain the heads. Around the mat a war dance was executed, to the beating of drums and the clashing of cymbals. Then the Oran-Kaya appeared, followed by one of the priestesses. The latter, muttering her so-called prayers, brandished a cock over everyone's head, strewed some rice about, and smeared some red liquid on the foreheads of the head-hunters.

A very important part of the festival was the skull-dance. All sorts of ornaments for the dance were purchased at Kuching, the capital. Mats were spread on the floor of the huts around the sacred tree, and all the gongs were taken there. On the eve, the Oran-Kaya and all the participants went to the hallowed spot. They carried with them the skulls of the animals already mentioned above, and exhibited them in the chief's tent, where they occupied the place of honor. Thirty skulls were selected from those used for the decoration of the young men's hut. These were carefully polished, and the noses and mouths painted red. Then they were tied together in threes and hung around the sacred tree. One pig and two hens were killed for the feasters. All the fish caught during the previous fortnight were deposited on trimmed bamboo. A dog was slain to appease the hungry and evil spirits.

On the following day the feast began in earnest and gave abundant proof that the Dyaks were, as yet, uncivilized. From daybreak until late at night the men of the tribe did nothing but jump and dance around the sacred tree, holding drawn swords or knives in one hand and the skulls or "holy" bones of the animals in the other. They tried to seize each other's trophies and gave such shrieks, yells, and howls that it seemed as if they were all possessed by the devil. Sometimes the jumping and yelling subsided a little, for they were well nigh exhausted. Then the chief raised himself from his bamboo throne, or one of the elders urged on the women and children, who beat the gongs and cymbals more wildly than before. At these signals the warriors took fresh courage. When a rest was absolutely necessary the skulls were deposited on a little mound and the crowd walked round and round in procession, singing a somewhat melancholy tune.

Those who participated for the first time in the skull dance were not allowed to return home but had to stay in the round huts for four days. Furthermore, they had to abstain till old age from venison, chicken, eggs, and several kinds of vegetables and fruit. It was believed that the smallest infraction of this law would be punished with sickness or even death. That they should inflict such heavy and such strict obligations on

themselves seems incomprehensible. It only shows how deeply their superstitions were rooted in their hearts.

During Father Westerwoudt's stay on the Singhi the old sacred tree, around which these festivals were held, suddenly withered and fell. Some of the Dyaks ascribed this sudden death to the presence of the Christian priest. Another tree grew upon the spot but, with God's grace, idolatry will have perished on the Singhi long before it reaches the venerable age of its predecessor.

IX

FIRST FRUITS

Forced inactivity is the heaviest cross which can be laid on the shoulders of a missioner zealous for souls. Father Westerwoudt did not falter under its weight, but something of what he endured may be learned from a letter which he wrote in April, 1886:

How much poetry our imagination puts into the missioner's life! We picture him roaming through virgin forests. He comes upon some out-of-the-way hut and preaches the Gospel, crucifix in hand, to an attentive audience. But, in reality, the journey is most often made on an empty stomach and in wet clothes or under a scorching sun. As to the attentive audience, it is non-existent. Some one always says laughingly: "That is all right for white men, Dyaks have other customs." Then the romance of it all is a little overshadowed, and one sees that consolation and help from on high are indispensable.

The thought of the numerous conversions granted to Saint Francis Xavier and to many other missioners filled Felix with a holy envy.

But for himself, he knew how to contain his soul in patience. An experienced fellow-missioner had told him that he must be prepared to wait four, six, or even eight, years before any results would be perceptible. After two years his anxious relatives asked him if his prospects were growing brighter. "We must not bind God to time," answered Felix.

When he had spent the greater part of a year amongst the Dyaks he could say that a couple of boys knew the "Our Father" and were studying the Apostles' Creed. This had already severely taxed the missioner's patience. It was extremely difficult to find terms in the Dyak tongue which would express the supernatural and yet be intelligible to the ignorant natives. The boys themselves were absolutely unmanageable and paid far more heed to the cries of birds of good or bad omen than to the white man's words. Several times he tried to have the boys live in his own hut, but on the slightest pretext they ran away.

He baptized the first infant on his mother's birthday, after he had been six months on the Singhi. But it recovered. At the end of a year, however, he had sent two little ones to heaven and baptized a boy of twelve in his dying hour. The boy had fallen from a tree and nearly severed his hand with an axe. The missioner had

been allowed to bandage him. After a few days the boy tore off the bandages and had recourse to the native remedy, juice from the betel-nut. Inflammation set in and the result was obvious. The lad had visited Felix several times and it was not too difficult to explain the ideas of God and of heaven to him. It was another matter, however, to awaken contrition in him; he had never done anything wrong, everybody liked him! Felix, trusting to God's mercy, baptized the poor heathen and had the joy of seeing him die a Christian. At first he doubted the wisdom of giving publicity to this fact, but in the end he decided to do so. He was obliged to allow the corpse to be cremated, but he openly blessed it with holy water and said prayers over it. When he was asked the meaning of this, he explained. Thus they knew on the Singhi that one of their tribe had died a Christian. But when would one of them live as a Christian?

Among the more faithful of the missioner's boys was the young Kottir, a lad of thirteen. He was apparently better disposed than the others, and well-endowed intellectually. We have proof of this in a letter written by his own hand to Father Westerwoudt's father in Amsterdam, in April, 1887. It was the first time that such a masterpiece had been achieved by a Singhi Dyak, and it must have cost the boy and his

teacher no small amount of pain and exertion. The incentive had been powerful. Father Westerwoudt owned a " quick-match ", self-igniting by means of small cartridges. It was now broken, but it had always excited Kottir's curiosity, and Felix promised that his father would send the boy one from Holland as soon as he could ask for it in his own handwriting. Felix translated the letter literally as follows:

Dear Sir:

I have seen the child of the rifle of the missionary on Singhi, your son. Me glad to play, now is broken. I ask of you one large enough, strong, otherwise soon broken. I asked the missionary to buy at Kuching, but is not; I think in land of white man many. Send powder much enough, to use ten years; and two threads yellow string, long ones. Me glad your son lives on Singhi, bid not return to land of you, else me not capable exercise religion true. Boys others not yet like me, three only come always on Sunday. All the old ones, father and mother, always angry with me; this not touches me, me glad follow religion true. Rising and sleeping and at night I pray also. I have learned writing a little, not yet I know much. Send pictures three: picture Gabriel comes from Heaven to house of Mary, picture kings three adore the Lord Jesus, picture St. Joseph and his Child, all pictures nice.

Name, my name Kottir.

The missioner did not know why Kottir selected just those pictures, but it was the boy's

own wish. He already knew part of the catechism and wished to be baptized. The parents were strongly opposed. It required a good deal of will power not to yield to them, and to all the temptations and bad examples which constantly surrounded Kottir. Yet he stood firm! His temper was hot and irritable and he had many faults, but he was in earnest. When told that he must go to confession once a year he proposed, of his own accord, to go once a month. But even then he knew that he could not possibly remember his faults so long. Se he resolved to keep a bit of paper always near him, on which all his shortcomings should be jotted down as soon as committed. When the time of Kottir's baptism was drawing near, Felix decided to call him Joseph. "This Saint has so often helped our family," he wrote, "no doubt he will particularly favour my mission work."

On August 15, the feast of the Assumption, the Dyak lad was baptized at Kuching, and the following Easter he made his First Communion. Two more boys were baptized that year. But the number of pupils at the missioner's little school remained very small. There were between three and six. It was uphill work, for, though there were so few boys, they took up all Father Westerwoudt's time. He had to translate morning and night prayers for them, and,

above all, the catechism. Their secular education was very simple. After morning prayers, Mass, and breakfast were over, they received lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic. This seemed to the Dyaks the height of civilization. Special attention was given to the catechism. Every day they worked a short time in the garden or on the missioner's new house. They were so restless that they could not remain at their studies for more than an hour at a time! But they were very eager to fetch provisions from the quay, gather wild vegetables in the woods, or examine their Dyak fishing nets.

The boys' up-keep was certainly not expensive. One dollar sufficed to provide for a boy for one month. Felix allowed his pupils to follow Dyak customs as to food, and also as to clothing, so long as the latter remained within the limits of modesty. He thought it best not to risk too abrupt changes. Though they had been such a short time with the missioner, his boys were already more civilized than their tribesmen, and their influence made itself felt to a certain extent. However, Father Westerwoudt suffered many a disappointment in his boys.

Only one of the six, Kottir, was destined to persevere. Another, Myrgon, strayed for long years. At last he returned, made a Christian marriage, and settled in the mission. The others

succumbed to the many temptations and married heathen girls. Little Dagiany, attracted by the pleasure of flying about everywhere, chose the Archangel Gabriel as his patron, and for a long time he served the missioner as assistant teacher. But he afterwards married a heathen priestess and became a bitter enemy of the Christians. Yet in spite of so many disappointments, when Father Westerwoudt's Superior suggested that he should undertake more promising work, the missioner begged to be left with his people.

When the palm-leaf hut tumbled down, Felix undertook to build a solid wooden house and chapel, chiefly from his own means. In case his work should have no visible fruits, he wanted to spare the impoverished Borneo mission. He made it clear, however, that he would never desire this to constitute a tie binding him to the Singhi against the wishes of his Superiors.

There was no level ground available for the mission compound, and digging revealed such enormous masses of rock that Felix was obliged to have recourse to the Borneo Company for dynamite, which was used in its mercury and antimony mines. A spot was cleared by blasting, in almost the only place where the sun could penetrate and dry the extraordinarily damp soil. It was a pretty site, but it did not offer the splendid view which the missioner had enjoyed

from the old palm hut. There was a small garden in front of the house and all the rest of the premises were surrounded by thick woods. Building material was another drawback. All that did not grow on the spot could be brought there only with the greatest difficulty. Camphor-wood, which is proof against the white ants, was found near the cremation grounds, but no native would touch it, as such places were considered the natural haunts of witches, ghosts, and evil spirits. Iron-wood did not grow on the mountain, and the quantity necessary for the poles had to be brought up from the river, a distance of seven miles.

At first the roof of the house was of palm leaves, but later these were replaced by more durable iron-wood. The greatest ornament was a wooden turret containing a solid church bell. It resounded over an area of a mile and soon it would call the Dyaks to worship the God Whom the white man had made known to them. This bell was highly necessary, for the Dyak idea of time was most primitive. It was no wonder they could not tell the day of the week, when their only designation for the hours of each day was the name of some occupation. Thus they would say: "It was at rice-pounding time; or, at rice-drying time; or, it lasted twice the time of cooking a meal."

FATHER WESTERWOUDT'S SUCCESSOR AND CONFRÈRES AT THE SINGHI MISSION

The work progressed slowly but it was finished at last. Felix had started building in the early months of 1888, and he asked Father Goossens to bless his wooden church at the end of June. The bell was a present from the missioner's parents. On the evening of June 27 it sounded over the campong, to the great stupefaction of the Singhis. They could not understand how a thin rope could draw such a beautiful voice from that heavy copper thing.

The next day the blessing took place, and the Holy Sacrifice was offered in the little church. The remaining festivities were partly a failure. The chief had forbidden his subjects to partake of the Dyak meal which was to enhance the splendor of the feast, because all pagan practices were to be eliminated from it. Several disobeyed his commands, however, partly to please the missioner and partly because of the proffered dainties, such as a pig killed for the occasion and rice cooked in bamboo. A newcomer from Europe, who should have witnessed the beating of cymbols and gongs, the performance of Dyak dances, and the firing of old guns, would have thought himself at a scalping party rather than a church consecration. The house was red with spittle stained with betel-nut and other substances. Father Westerwoudt had decided to have this feast to show that it was possible to

rejoice without superstitious practices. He acknowledged to himself that his success was doubtful.

Near the mouth of a small river, the Musi, about seven miles from Singhi, there was a Malay house, surrounded by a few fruit trees. This was the missioner's landing place. At the time of which we write, he bought the property for ten dollars. This gave him a place where he could pass the night, whenever it was necessary, and where he could store the goods that awaited a carrier. Such goods were perfectly safe, as stealing was unknown among the Dyaks.

About this time Felix acquired a welcome neighbor in the person of Father Goossens. The latter was appointed to a new mission station halfway between Kuching and Singhi, at Sang-kap-kong. Felix could reach Father Goossens, by land or by sea, within a few hours. The missioners journeyed to the new station together, and were invited to stay with a Chinese Christian, who gave them a site for a good chapel on his own grounds. When this man was still a pagan he had built a devil's temple. Since his conversion it was a constant reproach to his conscience, but he had allowed the neighbors to make use of it and it had become public property. He asked the missioners to destroy it by fire, but they did not feel that it would be well to do so. How-

ever, as soon as Mass had been said in the new mission chapel, the temple became useless to the pagan Chinese; the devil no longer answered the questions put to him. Henceforth the missioners met frequently at Sang-kap-kong, and Father Goossen's companionship was a great comfort to Father Westerwoudt.

At the end of 1889, Father Westerwoudt celebrated Christmas for the first time on the Singhi itself, with his Christians and catechumens. There was none of the Christmas cheer of former years, with snow and glittering stars in the frosty heavens. But the missioner said Midnight Mass in his own neat little church, among those few souls he had begotten in Christ, and his heart was full of joy. He was able to give Holy Communion to some, and there were two baptisms.

Thus, in spite of all obstacles, a little Christian community was forming. Christ said: "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." So He was surely in the midst of Father Westerwoudt's little flock, which already outnumbered two or three. More Dyaks began to come to the church on Sunday. The bell reminded them of the white man's worship, and the wooden chapel was more attractive than the rickety palm leaf hut of the first days. So the zealous missioner's parish work increased gradually.

Aside from this, Father Westerwoudt was carrying a new and heavy burden. The Prefect Apostolic of Borneo, Father Jackson, asked Propaganda to relieve him, as he felt his strength failing. His request was vain, so he set out for America on a begging tour, to gather the funds necessary for a church and school in Kuching. He was gone from the latter part of 1888 till the spring of 1893. During all this time he entrusted Father Westerwoudt with the government of the whole Borneo mission. The other missioners had ample faculties, it is true, but Felix was obliged to oversee everything as minutely as possible because of reports which he, as acting superior, was expected to send to the Mother House, to Propaganda, to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and so forth. He had to erect new stations from time to time, and visit the old ones. He traveled a great deal during this period, and his journeys in the interior of Borneo were a fresh source of that suffering he had longed for in his seminary days.

X

JOURNEYINGS BY LAND AND SEA

Father Westerwoudt's resolve, made when he arrived at Singhi, to go to Kuching every two weeks, was never put into effect. It was usually a month between his trips to the valley, and then he was driven by necessity. He had to go to confession, and he had to procure certain indispensable articles such as salt, oil, tea, salt fish, and matches. These trips were also the only means he had of receiving and posting mail. Quite frequently the dangerous journey was made by night.

Sometimes the road to the Singhi was over six feet under water, for a distance of several miles. This happened after the heavy showers, when the little streams were swollen to rivers. Once Felix swam nearly the whole way. He made a small raft and put his clothes and breviary on it. This was pushed through the water by his boy, and the missioner himself swam from one tree to another, resting in between. Another time, instead of going by boat from the landing on Musi river, he made the whole journey from

Singhi to Kuching on foot. He started at dawn and barely managed to reach his destination by nightfall. The first half of the journey led over a mountain. The missioner had to follow a Dyak foot-path, as narrow as a cart rut, where it was impossible to put his two feet side by side. The second half of the way was even worse. The ground was very swampy, and trees had been cut down to form a primitive sort of road. If the traveler did not watch each step very carefully, he was liable to fall on the hard trunks.

One of Father Westerwoudt's first inland journeys was to the Bambok tribe, from whom he bought a boat for use on the Musi river. The one that he purchased was heavy and unwieldy, and after the frequent rains it generally had to be fished up from the bottom of the river.

Father Jackson strongly advised Felix to keep to a single tribe in his pioneer work. But the missioner thought it well to visit the surrounding tribes from time to time. He wanted to make known his presence on the Singhi, and the fact that reading and writing were taught at his mission, in the hope that some might be attracted to visit him or to put their boys in his keeping. It might seem, at first thought, that these journeyings were a waste of energy, but they occasionally were the means of winning a soul. When the Good Shepherd goes out to look for the lost sheep

he does not heed the thorns and the briars which wound him along the way.

In October, 1886, Father Westerwoudt visited some neighboring tribes of Land Dyaks and got as far as Sambas, on Dutch territory. At first the road was fairly good but the heat was almost unbearable. After a particularly trying day, they reached the hut of a European who was prospecting for mercury for the North Borneo Company, and who received them kindly. Felix wished to visit the Tringus tribe and, in order to do this, they had to push on through a swampy primeval forest. The missioner and his boys had not forgotten to bind their trousers tightly around their legs, but in spite of that precaution they suffered greatly from leeches, which clung to their skin. No matter how often the leeches were removed, they returned, and seemingly in greater numbers. Betel-nut juice is a preventive, but its effects are not durable.

Further on, the path led along a broad but shallow river, which had to be waded some twenty times. The cool water was temptingly refreshing, but the Dyaks manifested great prudence. They passed through as quickly as possible, and stopped on the brink merely to rinse their mouths, in order to avoid the danger of a sudden change from the heat of the journey. When Father Westerwoudt reached the Tringus,

he learned that the chief was absent. He was allowed to await his return in the large round hut where the older boys slept. The white man was an object of great curiosity to the boys, especially when he knelt to pray before lying down.

On the following day the chief gave him a hearty welcome, and, in return for some half-penny knick-knacks, provided him with hens, rice, and eggs. The missioner wished to go on to the Sidin tribe on Dutch territory. That tribe often set traps for the wild swine, hardly discernible to the inexperienced eye, and hence very dangerous. So the chief, with his son, insisted on accompanying Father Westerwoudt. At first the way led along the slope of a mountain, where it was difficult to keep one's footing. The chief went first, sword in hand, to clear the way if necessary. Then the travelers were obliged to walk in the river for two hours. The water reached only to their waists, as it was the dry season, but the river bed was covered with sharp stones. On either hand stretched an impenetrable forest. Dinner was eaten sitting on a rock in midstream.

The missioner found the Sidin to be a tribe of some two hundred families. Scurvy was so prevalent among them that half the population was infected by it. Then the indefatigable priest

visited the Krokon, a very small tribe, and returned to the Singhi after a long day's journey through swampy ground. "My feet", he wrote, "deserved a rest, and my boy declared that he would not make such a journey again. At any rate, these poor people know now that a white man is living near them, willing to take their sons."

A year later, in July, 1887, Father Westerwoudt visited the Seramboe Dyaks. There were three tribes on Seramboe mountain, which is not far from Singhi. After a steep climb, the campongs were reached, but the natives had left for their rice fields. The missioner had no provisions with him and, though he was quite ready to fast, his boy was of a different opinion. So they hastened homewards, in order to pass through the wilderness before dark. On the way they came upon a Chinese temple, or devil's house, kept by an old Chinaman. There, near some sort of altar, and in the company of vermin large and small, they passed the night. At sunrise Felix set out for the rice fields of the Seramboe Dyaks. But the natives scattered and the chief was absent, so the expedition was a failure. However, Felix did not forget his Seramboes and he returned later for a more successful visit.

Father Westerwoudt usually made these inland journeys as rapidly as possible, in the company

of one or two of his boys. After the arrival of Father Goossens, his cheerful company made the trips less painful and they were sometimes lengthened. The two missioners also arranged for a monthly visit to Kuching in each other's company. On the appointed day Father Goossens went to his own landing place and watched for his confrère's boat. It was recognizable at a great distance by its ungainly form, wobbling movement, and long oars. Felix rested a while, and then the two friends covered the twelve miles which still separated them from Kuching, in the much lighter boat belonging to Father Goossens. They spoke of their difficulties and of an occasional consoling event, and talked over the news from their common fatherland.

A journey which Father Westerwoudt took in company with Father Dunn and Father Reyffert to their missions at Kanowit, was a real relaxation to him. This journey was made by rowboat, steamer, and native man-of-war. The latter, its rowers emitting terrifying war cries, ploughed through the water at high speed, but the necessity of remaining huddled down with one's chin on one's knees made this mode of travel not too agreeable. At Kanowit they found two other Fathers and a lay brother. The pretty house was almost too small. Felix was able to enjoy a bath, a luxury unknown on the Singhi. A com-

parative study of the local customs and dialects gave a useful scope to his visit; and moreover, he was refreshed in body and soul by the sorely needed rest and the brotherly intercourse. The astonishment of the Singhi boy who was with him beggared words. On his return he gave a wonderful description of the Christians and their ways, and emphasized especially that they could read and write and were happy.

In June, 1891, Father Westerwoudt visited the stations of North Borneo. A missioner had died and the vacancy had to be filled. The voyage should have lasted only three days and nights, but it extended over a week. As there was no cabin available on the little Sarawak steamer, the missioner slept on deck. When he landed at Labuan a most agreeable surprise awaited him; he found there Fathers Reyffert and Driessen, who had been intimate companions of his at the Seminary in Holland even before the Mill Hill days. The joy of the reunion compensated for the discomforts of the journey.

Father Reyffert and Felix visited the small town of Papar, opposite the island of Gaya. Its inhabitants were descendants of pirates, and they maintained the fame of their ancestors, for no better boatsmen could be found. The missioner at Papar was ill and needed help. The two visiting missioners remained as nurse and school-

teacher for ten days, until the patient was well enough to be left alone. The trip brought Father Westerwoudt into contact with conditions slightly different from those on his own mountain.

The coast of North Borneo is inhabited by Malays and Bajans, the interior by Dusans. These people were more civilized than the Dyaks. They were not nomads like the Sea Dyaks, nor did they cluster round a mountain like the Land Dyaks. They dwelt in the valleys and used buffaloes to plough their rice fields. These animals were not only indispensable for cultivation, but they also took the place of vehicles of all kinds, and often one could see two or three people crossing a river on the back of a buffalo. The youngest children could ride them unsaddled, holding to the bridle when going uphill, and to the tail when going down. Towards the end of his life, Father Westerwoudt made an attempt to import some of these buffaloes for Singhi's rice fields. His death frustrated this plan, but he succeeded in buying some for the Fathers in Kanowit.

From Papar the missioners went to Patatan. Three men and a boy accompanied Fathers Westerwoudt and Reyffert. Because of the stormy sea, they had chosen the land route, but this proved especially difficult. What bridges

there were had been swept away in the rains, and the missioners nearly lost their lives more than once in wading small rivers. The roads in the hill country proved so rough that the Dusans refused to carry the baggage any farther and the little band was forced to make for the coast. Finally, all the stations were visited, and then Father Reyffert remained to take the place of Father Rientjer, who had been drowned. Father Rientjer was the latest comer to Borneo, but he was the first to go to his reward.

On the return voyage from Patatan to Labuan great difficulties were met. It was impossible for the boat to plough its way through the surf, though it was manned by Bajans. It was necessary to pass the night in the open, under a heavy rain, in the mouth of the river; but with morning came a favorable wind and the voyagers were able to make land. The boy who accompanied Father Westerwoudt gave the following account of the journey in a letter to the missioner's father:

Not long ago I traveled to Labuan and to Papar and to Patatan, and when we left there the missioner of Singhi asked three men to take us over to Labuan. That night we reached the mouth of Kanowit river. As we were going to cross over to Labuan, there came rain, a great storm and large breakers. Much water entered the boat. The boat nearly turned over and

we did not know where we were going. Land and water were black. The Malays who rowed us were afraid, so they called for help from Mohammed. As the storm did not cease, I became afraid. The Singhi missioner, seeing my fear, said: "Be not afraid, for our Guardian Angel watches over us." When he said this my heart was no longer afraid.

Ten years later, in 1896, Felix revisited Kanowit. This time the trip was made merely to restore his failing health. Father Keyser, whom Felix had not seen in all that time, gave him a hearty welcome and did all he could to nurse him back to health. Great changes for the better had taken place at Kanowit during the decade and they must have filled Father Westerwoudt's heart with hope for his own dear mission. Formerly the Kanowit mission had only one small house, which served as residence, chapel, and school. Now, in addition, it had a school building and a beautiful large church, made wholly of iron-wood. Forests had been transformed into meadows and rice-fields, and there were fifteen buffaloes at work in them. The spiritual returns were as satisfactory as the material progress.

We have spoken, for the most part, only of Father Westerwoudt's own journeyings. But journeys were frequently made to the Singhi by the other missioners. Father Dunn, who was

Prefect Apostolic of Borneo during the last years of Felix's life, never lost an opportunity of seeing him. He said that he considered a visit to the Singhi a sort of pilgrimage, from which he returned edified and strengthened.

Felix's poverty, his many hardships, and his precarious health, were thus known to a few but he wished to keep them from as many as possible, particularly his dear ones at home. Doctor Driessen, brother of the missioner, who was in Java on business, once made his way up the Singhi, and Felix was eternally grateful to the kind physician that he did not reveal, on his return to Holland, the details of what he had found. In 1896 Felix was visited by Father Aelen, Superior of Saint Joseph's, Roosendael. Father Aelen knew some of the missioner's family and Felix was overjoyed to be able to talk of his dear ones. "I forgot", he wrote, "that I was a missioner; I was only a son and a brother." After his return to Holland, Father Aelen was besieged with questions, and he finally admitted enough of the truth about Felix to open his family's eyes. This was harder for Felix Westerwoudt to bear than his own sufferings.

XI

REINFORCEMENTS

FATHER WESTERWOUDT passed five and a half years without a helper on the Singhi. He had been offered a lay brother, but refused. He felt that others needed such help more than he, for he had neither a school nor a plantation. What caused him the gravest anxiety during those years was the impossibility of gaining any real influence with the women and the girls. For what would become of his boys if they contracted heathen marriages?

He began to look forward to the day when there would be Sisters on the Singhi. The Franciscan Sisters who worked for Saint Joseph's Society had already started girls' schools at Kuching and elsewhere, and they were expecting several more Sisters from England. Father Westerwoudt seized the opportunity and invited the Mother Superior to visit Singhi, and see if she thought it a fit place for Sisters to live. He hesitated at the thought of the journey, which at some seasons of the year was impossible for a woman. But he knew of what courage and generosity a Catholic Sister's heart is capable.

SISTERS OF THE SINGHI MISSION, WITH THEIR NATIVE PUPILS

Fortunately, he was not deceived. Two Sisters were allowed to settle on the Singhi. As this was in the nature of an experiment, Felix offered to bear the expense of the building of a house and he agreed to provide for their wants for three years. He had made the plan for the house himself, but just as he was about to start building he was called to North Borneo. Father Goossens insisted on his friend's going, for his health was not at all satisfactory at that time. He promised to take care of the building during Felix's absence, and when the latter returned he found everything in perfect order. So, in September, 1891, the Mother Superior brought to Singhi two Sisters, for whom a life of great poverty and privation now began.

The Sisters took care of the chapel and did the missioner's cooking. In their actual mission work, success was heartbreakingly slow in coming. Father Westerwoudt had expected this and prepared them for it. It was difficult to secure desirable girls as pupils, because many were trained from an early age in the superstitions of priestesses and medicine women. Moreover, in the family life most of the work fell to the lot of the women and girls, and it was almost impossible for the girls to be spared to go to live with the Sisters, or even to study with them for short periods. As for the Sisters themselves,

one of them was soon at home and quickly acquired a smattering of the Dyak language. But the other fell ill and suffered continually from fevers. The children were afraid of these white women in their long black robes, with their heads wrapped in black and white cloths, and they ran at their approach.

A full year after the Sisters' arrival, however, in September, 1892, Father Westerwoudt felt that the prayers he had asked for were being answered. The Sisters had four girls and a little boy in their care. "The quality is not exactly first rate," he wrote, "for two of them have bow legs, and a third has skin disease. Our convent looks more like a hospital than a school. But it is all for the love of God, and perhaps we shall be rewarded later by a greater number of healthy ones."

By Easter, 1893, there were a few more little ones in the convent, and two girls were baptized. They were called Mary and Catherine, after the patron saints of Singhi convent. Father Westerwoudt had a greater number of school boys, also. Some had already left him, making room for others. Joseph Kottir was in the service of the Sisters. He did all the rough work for them, such as chopping wood, carrying water, and so forth. Another boy who had grown beyond the school age was a poor hunchback, who was in-

capable of doing any work. He became quite famous as Singhi's first and only shop-keeper. In reality his sole trade was a certain amount of bartering, which sufficed for *Humpy's* modest needs.

That same year the Christians planted a rice-field, which the missioner blessed. The crop was a poor one, but at least the Christians' field produced as much as any other. Father Felix was not too exacting. He wrote: "Praise be to God! now the heathens can no longer claim that becoming a Christian and rice-planting are irreconcilable. Probably they will find some other excuse. Conversion is a grace from God. This the missioner daily experiences; but that is just why he always looks forward so hopefully to the future!"

Felix had long been turning over in his mind the idea of a coffee plantation, where his Christians could find profitable employment. He made a first attempt in 1890. As coffee does not grow on damp and level ground, it would be possible to utilize the mountain slope. Here, as elsewhere, the missioner met with great opposition from the chief, who gave his sanction to the plan only after intervention by the District Resident.

The most direct way to the plantation from the mission-house led through one of the cremation grounds. Father Goossens accompanied

his friend on one of his trips thither and afterwards wrote: "I saw, hanging from trees, baskets in which babies had been deposited. Only two or three days ago a dead babe had been brought there, and it was one mass of corruption. Human limbs, half burnt and decayed, lay around, and their fearful stench reached the missioner-planter even at a distance. The rest is best left unsaid."

Yet the "missioner-planter", as Father Goossens called him, persisted in these unpleasant expeditions till the time of his death. After his school hours and the visits to his Christians, he went with his boys to weed the plantation. No labor was too great for him when it was a question of the good of his flock. In a material way, the plantation was not a success, although Felix did have the satisfaction of actually tasting his own coffee. Coffee planting demands hard labor and does not yield immediate results. The Dyaks were not good cultivators and preferred immediate gain. So they did not respond to Father Westerwoudt's efforts. But until his death the plantation provided a means of employment for his boys, and they were pleased with the pay the missioner gave them for their work.

In the midst of such incessant labors for his own flock, Felix did not cease to think of the other tribes and to desire that they, too, might have the gift of faith. His friend, Father

Goossens, had opened an out-station at Paku for the Chinese. A little farther on lived several tribes of Seramboe Dyaks, and the two priests decided to combine their efforts and do something for them. With the help of a couple of boys they built a hut of wood and palm leaves, near Paku. This structure was to be used as a school, served by the two priests in turn. They started with four boys, but one was removed by his father and another got home-sick. After four month's time, Felix was obliged to admit that the Goossens-Westerwoudt Company had gone bankrupt. The failure was definitely confirmed by Father Jackson, who visited the different stations after his return to Borneo. Among the changes which followed his visitation of the missions, was the transfer of Father Goossens to North Borneo.

This loss was a real trial for the Singhi missioner. He was also deprived of the company of Father Van den Broeck, who had been stationed at Kuching and who was sent north. "He made my monthly visits at Kuching so pleasant," he wrote, "and Father Goossens, only three hours distant from Singhi, was my confrère, my confessor, and my adviser."

The new school at Paku was totally abandoned. Those boys who could be persuaded to do so, went with the missioner to Singhi, and on the

list of newly baptized at Christmas, 1894, were five Seramboe Dyaks. But they did not get on well with the Singhi boys, and one by one they left the mission house. Father Westerwoudt, however, did not lose sight of his Seramboe Christians, and he visited them whenever it was possible. Though they were only at an hour's distance from Paku, they profited nothing, or almost nothing, by the Chinese mission station. For the Chinese had a great contempt for the Dyaks, whom they called forest-dwellers, and this contempt was so extreme that they wanted their own priests. The missioners who worked among the Dyaks were not able to influence the Chinese, and were deemed of little account. But better days were at hand for the Seramboe Dyaks.

In October, 1895, good news reached the Singhi. Father Reyffert had been assigned to help Felix. This was done chiefly that Felix might be free to do more for the Seramboe. He at once opened an out-station at Podam. "The new Saint Anthony's", he wrote, "is a very humble station. It lies at the foot of Seramboe mountain, and it numbers only thirty doors, as we say here; which means three long houses, built on poles, containing ten families each. A few smaller campongs lie scattered in the vicinity."

There Felix began life once more, in a hut of palm leaves twenty feet square. As of old

on the Singhi, a partition shut off the chapel-bedroom from the rest of the hut. Unfortunately, he was frequently absent. Singhi continued to be his own main station and he often assisted Father Reyffert there. He was also called elsewhere, for there was a great scarcity of missioners in Borneo at that time. Father Jackson, who was really too old to carry the burden of the Apostolic Prefecture, had resigned with the approbation of Propaganda, and had left for England. Almost at the same time, several of the missioners who had so valiantly shared the burden succumbed. They died or else were obliged to return to England. If Father Reyffert's appointment had not been previous to all these trials it would probably never have been made. As things stood, it seemed doubtful whether the new station, Podam, could be maintained.

The hopes of the Borneo mission were staked on the newly ordained priests, but in August, 1896, news came that, by wish of Propaganda, all the out-going missioners were to be sent to Central Africa. Father Westerwoudt did not lose courage. He wrote: " We must do the same amount of work, with four priests less. But at least the upkeep of the mission will be cheaper! "

Father Haidegger, the Acting Prefect, had great difficulty in maintaining the different stations, and this would have been entirely impos-

sible if the missioners had not been so willing to substitute. Thus, Felix celebrated Christmas, 1896, on the Singhi; the next day he hastened to Podam; and from there he went to Kuching, where he was to substitute for Father Haidegger. The following year Father Reyffert was called away from the Singhi by the illness of a confrère. Would he return? Nobody knew. "I am again sole master on my mountain," Felix wrote in May, 1897, "but Podam will be the loser. However, we must take things as they come."

In the fall of 1897 an event took place which Felix called the most important in the sixteen years' existence of the Borneo mission. Father Jackson's place was filled by Father Dunn, one of the first three missioners to land in Borneo. Travelers in Borneo know that it is almost impossible to meet at a certain place on a fixed date. But Father Dunn would hear of no insurmountable obstacles, and convoked a provincial chapter at Kuching. The chapter opened on All Souls' Day. What a reunion that was! Priests met who had worked for years in the Borneo missions and had seldom or never seen one another. Some met for the first time; some were classmates who had not met since leaving the Seminary fifteen years before. Father Westerwoudt wrote as follows:

The few hours that remained for chatting passed all too quickly for our liking. That night our retreat began, conducted by the Very Reverend Father Prefect. It was a spiritual delight, such as we had never before experienced. In my opinion, the greatest trial the missioner has to endure is not the want of material comforts, but the total lack of all that awakens devotion, such as Solemn High Mass, Benediction, processions, and also a common retreat. Time was limited, so the retreat was short. It was followed by a free day, and then the chapter was opened. Each priest related his personal experiences. It was not an easy task to fix a general rule for missions so widely different in language and customs, but within three days' time everything was arranged to the satisfaction of both our Superior and his subordinates.

How much we should have liked to prolong our reunion! But the hour of parting had struck. The boat for Labuan and North Borneo was weighing anchor and five of our nine missioners were obliged to leave. The farewell of friends when missioners leave Mill Hill is deeply moving, but perhaps not more so than this farewell of the Borneo priests. The expense and the difficulty of traveling, and the failing health of some, amply justified the doubt whether they would ever meet again. So much the heartier was the good-bye: "Farewell till we meet again; if not here, then hereafter!" That same day the boat from Singapore brought three new missioners, but I could only spend a few hours with them, as I had to return that night to my Dyaks.

On the occasion of the chapter the whole Borneo mission was especially consecrated to The Sacred Heart by the Very Reverend Prefect. The missioners did this, as we read in their report, to call down God's blessing in a special manner on their work. Writing to his parents later, Father Westerwoudt begged them to be especially mindful of the poor Borneo heathen on the First Fridays, and to set aside on those days a small alms, that the missioners might have the means to prepare worthier abodes for their hidden God in their miserable chapels.

The previous efforts of the Borneo missioners had not been crowned with the desired success. This they considered to be due wholly to their own weakness and imperfections. So they determined to make a further sacrifice and increase the number of fast days in the week. They hoped that thus The Sacred Heart might bless more abundantly their efforts, and that by spending themselves more they might become worthier instruments of God for the salvation of souls. This resolve is a revelation of the apostolic spirit which animated those priests. Their life was already beset with every kind of hardship, but they were ready to suffer more, if by so doing they might promote the kingdom of God.

After the chapter, since three new arrivals had somewhat reinforced the thinned ranks of Borneo

missioners, Father Reyffert was sent back to the Singhi. God's mercy was evident in this, for thus the poor Singhi Dyaks would not be left alone in that near future, when their first missioner would go to his well-earned rest.

XII

VIA CRUCIS

As we have seen, Father Westerwoudt did not conquer whole regions for the Faith; he did not lead thousands, or even hundreds, of souls to the Mother Church. A tiny flock of the faithful was the fruit of his entire apostolate, and the cross which he planted on the Singhi had only begun to take root when the missioner died. There were about twenty Christians, who had been confirmed, and two Catholic households, the children of which Felix had baptized. His labors might appear vain to those who, looking on from afar, do not understand what it means to be a victim. But such was not the opinion of those who came in contact with the Singhi missioner. They felt in him a holiness far beyond the ordinary. All his actions were accompanied by the same perfection. He stayed his own weakness on the infinite strength of God and apparent failures had no power to disquiet him.

The main characteristics of Father Westerwoudt's life on the Singhi were his remarkable

prudence, his invincible confidence, his patience, his never failing good spirits, and his love of poverty and mortification. Some of these virtues were part of his nature as, for instance, his innate cheerfulness. But others were the result of a constant struggle. He was not naturally very patient nor meek. And yet his life of humility won the admiration of all who knew him. His prudence showed itself throughout all the years of his apostolate, and had much to do with the final success of his mission. One thoughtless action might have ruined his chances. He always sought advice and deferred to the judgment of those more experienced than himself, and acted only after long deliberation and prayer. In this manner he gained, step by step, a footing on the Singhi.

The conversion of the Singhi Dyaks had become his goal. He did not stop to question whether it would be reached during his own lifetime. He knew that the ultimate victory would be Christ's. So he never desired to be transferred. When this question was broached, he always asked to be allowed to stay with his people, spending himself to the last. Towards the end, when a temporary leave would have been beneficial to his health, the very mention of it was painful to him. He knew well that his Dyaks could not do without him. Those chil-

dren in the Faith, surrounded by every temptation, had need of all his devotion and patience. His love for them manifested itself at all seasons, day and night. He shared in their games and in their work, he taught them, he nursed them when they were ill, he washed and bandaged their wounds and their sores. His Superior, Father Dunn, said of him: "For more than twelve years, day after day, to visit after school hours those who cared nothing for him and remained indifferent, never to rebuff anyone, never to let anyone wait, always to be at everybody's disposal, — this does, indeed, require heroic virtue."

Father Dunn related an instance of Felix's patience which he witnessed during his first visit to the Singhi. The two missioners were seated at their usual meal of rice and bananas. Fraternal intercourse seasoned the humble dish, and this was a happiness the solitary Singhi pastor did not often enjoy. Of a sudden a Dyak entered. His arms were covered with sores from his hands to his elbows. He sat down unabashed and leaned his elbows on the table. The matter from his sores trickled down. Father Westerwoudt betrayed neither impatience, disgust, nor irritation. He cheerfully asked the man his business, without discontinuing his meal. In his opinion, it would have been a mistake to turn the man away,

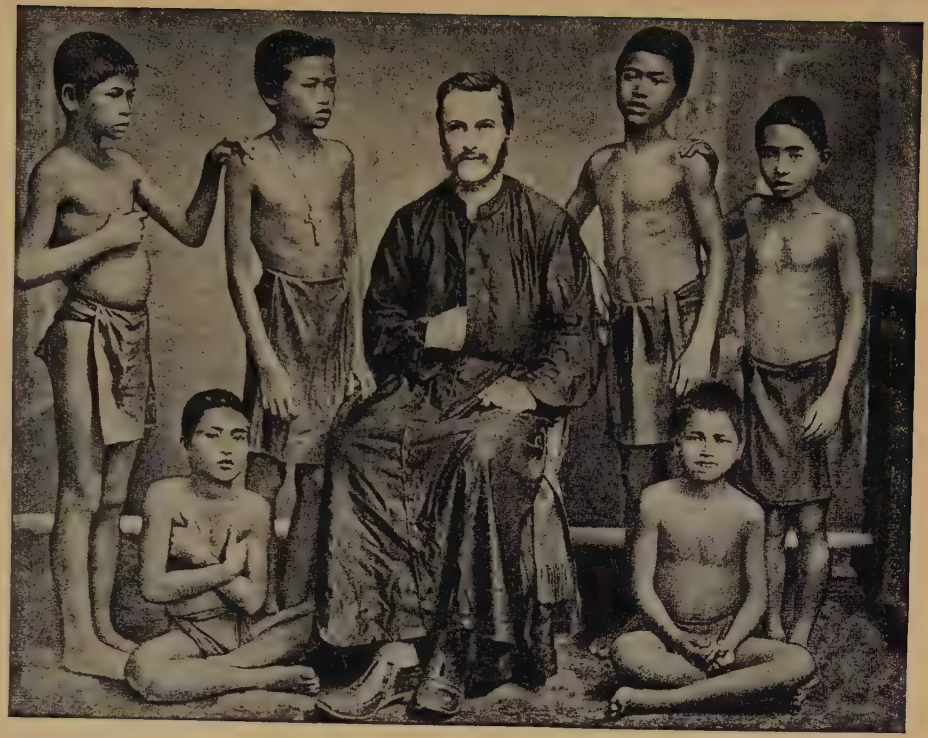
for he would not have come again. Father Reyffert reported that the instance related by Father Dunn was a daily occurrence. The presence of such guests at table certainly did not render the Singhi missioner's miserable food more savory. And yet, in his younger days Felix was extremely dainty in food and drink and much bent upon cleanliness and order. Now, his life was the realization of the maxim of Saint Francis de Sales: "Ask nothing, refuse nothing."

Once Felix and Father Goossens were to spend several days together at Kuching. On the appointed day Father Goossens went to meet his friend at the landing place. He was not there, and Father Goossens became anxious, for usually Felix was very punctual. Half-way up the Singhi, he met boys who had come to tell him that their missioner had a swollen leg. When he reached the house he found Father Westerwoudt reclining in a half-sitting, half-lying position. His red sash hung from one of the beams, and his leg was resting in the sash. A few old women stood around him. The leg was red and inflamed and looked very bad, but the missioner himself was as cheerful as ever. He asked the women to withdraw, and then told Father Goossens that they had been nursing his leg. They had been squatting around the leg and spitting on the injured region. As usual in such

cases, they had chewed betel, sirih, and gambier, and their spittle was red. Felix was too kind-hearted to refuse this disgusting remedy. Some leeches, applied by Father Goossens, were more efficacious, but the old women cried out that their father was being killed.

This was in later years. At first the life or death of the white man would have been a matter of total indifference to them; in fact, if anything, they would have preferred his death. The Dyaks appeared to be the most unfeeling and heartless people imaginable. Expressions like "I thank you" were unknown to them. They would ask for all kinds of things, and when they received one gift always asked for another; yet their manner was so indifferent that it seemed doubtful whether they would carry the gifts away, or drop them on the spot. They never rendered the missioner a service, nor gave him anything unless it was so decayed as to be useless to themselves. Only on one occasion was this ingratitude known to wring a complaint from the missioner's heart. His boys had run away without the least sign of thanks to the man who had given them education, food, clothes, and love. Father Westerwoudt wrote: "When you give a dog a crust it wags its tail, but from them there is nothing, nothing whatever!"

In spite of the coldness of their hearts, how-



FATHER WESTERWOUDT AND HIS BOYS IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE MISSION

ever, the Dyaks loved their children. A Dyak never beat nor ill-treated his children, and even boys of twelve and fourteen played with their little brothers and sisters for hours at a stretch. Father Westerwoudt's unfailing kindness towards the little ones could not fail to touch the hearts of their mothers. Gradually they learned to love the tender-hearted missioner who bore all their ingratitude with a smiling countenance.

This constant cheerfulness was one of Father Westerwoudt's greatest attractions. He performed the vilest offices as if it were a pleasure. And yet he had to fight against ill health, great weariness, and the torrid heat. Nothing was ever too much for him to undertake. He was never known to be bad-tempered, he never took anything amiss. No excitement was visible in his actions. He complained of nothing and nobody, always spoke kindly of persons accused, and quietly discouraged all detraction. It must not be forgotten that he was dealing with a most primitive people who, even when they were converted, were subject to many of their old vices. Such a people called for a sublime degree of devotedness, patience, and long-suffering on the part of the missioner who sought to win them. In the end not only the Christians, but even the pagans, respected and loved Father Westerwoudt. They conversed with him intimately and be-

stowed on him the honorable title of "Grandfather".

The Singhi missioner did not see his brethren very often, because of the inaccessible nature of the mountain. When in their presence, he never put himself forward. He was cheerful and pleasant, though always recollected. When his opinion was asked, he was straightforward yet prudent, careful not to wound. The missioners who worked among the Chinese used to tease him about his parishioners, for the Chinese have a great contempt for the Dyaks. Felix took it all in good part but he himself never spoke ill of another, not even of a native. He was admired and loved by all his fellow-missioners.

Though good to others, Felix was pitiless to himself. He offered himself as a victim for his flock and strove to become by personal merit the mediator for those entrusted to him. His favorite weapons in this holy warfare were humility and mortification so great as to recall the most beautiful examples of God's saints. The Borneo mission was very poor and all its priests often suffered want; but everyone testified that Felix was Borneo's poor missioner "par excellence", and this by his own choice. There were hardships that were unavoidable in his difficult post; but besides these, there were others which he voluntarily imposed upon himself. He

had rivetted his will in the fetters of mortification, and, like Saint Francis of old, had given his heart to his beloved Bride, Holy Poverty, for the love of God.

If he had permitted it, his parents would have kept him supplied with more nourishing food. But he chose to live like his flock, a Dyak with the Dyaks. At first he did not always fare even as well as they. There were times when he actually had nothing to eat and when the Dyaks refused to sell him anything. Once, when he had no food, he saw a basket of eggs hanging under a house. He asked to buy some but met with a refusal. Fearing to be overcome with hunger, he threw down twice the price of the eggs and appropriated them. His hunger must have been great, indeed, for ordinarily he fasted with wonderful fortitude. His fellow-missioners who accompanied him on his journeys bore witness to this. And not only did he show fortitude in the face of hunger, but he remained cheerful and serene.

When dainties were sent him from the homeland he left them untouched and offered them as a treat to the next missioner who visited him. When Father Reyffert joined Felix on the Singhi he tried to persuade him to allow himself something extra on Sundays and feast days. "No, no," answered Felix, kindly but firmly, "it is

not at all necessary." And there the matter ended. This refusal of what is pleasing to the taste was not the only mortification which Felix practised. He often partook readily of what others would have refused with disgust. He accepted gratefully the decayed food given him by the Dyaks. He even found the preserved durian eatable, though neither the other Fathers, to whom he had sent some on trial, nor their black boys, could eat the fruit.

It may be safely said that every day which Felix passed on the Singhi was a fresh source of mortification. His hardships were legion; the burning sun which beat down upon him during his journeys, the torrential showers which soaked him to the skin, the chilly nights, the sharp pebbles of the river beds, the swamps full of leeches, were only a few of the things he had to endure.

At night Father Westerwoudt voluntarily prolonged the day's sufferings. Father Goossens has given a description of his friend's bedroom. While Felix was in North Borneo, Father Goossens looked after his mission for him. Once while he was there he felt feverish and wanted to lie down. He had great difficulty in climbing on to his friend's bed, for it was four or five feet from the ground. There was no mattress, and the only pillow was a piece of bamboo about

five inches in diameter. Father Goossens said to himself: "If he can do it, I can, too!" But he was soon obliged to give up, for a round block of wood was not the most comfortable of pillows.

In the evening after his boys had gone to bed, Father Westerwoudt often worked for hours. He wrote by hand the little prayer books, a real labor of love and patience. As more were always needed, the task was endless. He also wrote his own textbooks and a Land-Dyak lexicon. The first piece of printing done in the Singhi language was a memorial sketch of Father Westerwoudt himself.

Father Reyffert hardly dared to tell of the state of his friend's clothing. After Father Westerwoudt's death his few belongings were sent home. But his faithful companion did not send the threadbare cassock with its many patches, nor the satchel which had a strip of lamp-wick by way of a handle, nor the hat held together by woolen rags. These would have revealed too much to the loving hearts in the homeland. Father Westerwoudt's brethren were wont to call him by the name of his patron saint, the poor Capuchin, Felix of Cantalice. The allowance which the Borneo missioners received was so scanty as to be often insufficient; yet Felix always managed to put something aside. Sometimes he returned the allowance or asked to be passed

over, saying that he could hold out a few months longer.

In his letters, Father Westerwoudt always made light of ill health. He sometimes spoke of a swollen foot as "something very common here", or of a little fever as "natural to the climate". Then, after relating his doings, he would usually conclude: "So you see, I am all right." But in reality his complaints were far from being passing trifles. Owing to the circumstances in which he lived, to his privations, and also to the fact that he never spared himself when help was needed, he was soon attacked by open wounds, especially on the legs. These were caused partly by leeches and insects in the swamps, and partly by mosquitoes. The irritation was almost unbearable, and as soon as these bites were rubbed they became deep black holes. All the Borneo priests suffered from them, but Felix more than many, and his wounds were exceptionally slow in healing. Yet he never betrayed his suffering, nor sought relief by stretching his legs nor resting them on a chair.

Once, when he went to visit Father Goossens at Sang-Kap-Kong, he tried a new short cut. "I remember well", this Father wrote, "how he scrambled up to my house, greatly exhausted. He sat down and began to tell of the manifold difficulties peculiar to the road. Of a sudden I

saw blood dripping on the floor, and I drew his attention to it. Then he told me how often he had been obliged to take off his clothes in order to remove the big leeches which had covered his body. With him, such annoyances were accepted as a matter of course."

Sometimes the wounds obliged Felix to give up his missionary visits. Then he would be found half reclining, talking and joking with visitors. He never complained, and only this tell-tale inactivity indicated his sufferings. His legs were discolored up to the knees, and often festering very badly. Even when the wounds had healed, the scars bothered him to the end of his life. This genuine self-denial went hand in hand with an even temper and a gentle behavior in all things. When anxious inquiries reached him from home, he would reply: "I am looking after myself well. I climb the mountain as quickly as ever, and I am cheerful and contented, so you see I am all right." But a photograph which reached Holland a few years before his death told a different story; there was suffering and exhaustion in the features, and the cassock hung in folds around the shrunken and bent shoulders. The priest's body had indeed become the slave of a soul that knew no rest.

There remains to be mentioned one mortification which was harder to bear than any other.

There were good people who misunderstood Felix and misrepresented his intentions. He never spoke of this, but it caused him great suffering. God did not deprive him of this trial, which He usually sends to His elect.

The only possible source of such a mortified and saintly life was deep faith and an ardent love of God. No weariness could keep Father Westerwoudt from his devotional exercises. He visited Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament many times in the day, to seek strength and courage for himself and grace for his flock. He prayed often and at regular hours. When Father Reyffert came, the two missioners always said their rosary together, pacing up and down on the veranda of their house. When Felix was weaker than usual his companion tried to persuade him to sit down, but only once would he do so. Much of Father Westerwoudt's inner life remains hidden from us. At Kuching, when he felt that death was near, he asked Father Reyffert to destroy all his papers and notes without exception or delay. In the absence of these documents, however, we may apply to the Singhi missioner the judgment of our Divine Savior: "By the fruit the tree is known."

XIII

THE LABORER GOES HOME

In March, 1898, Father Westerwoudt was to give a retreat to the lay Brothers of the mission, at the station of Paku. He was to start after celebrating the feast of Saint Joseph on the Singhi, but was taken suddenly ill the night before. Father Reyffert, hearing sounds which aroused his anxiety, went to Father Westerwoudt's room and found him suffering with pains in the chest. The next morning Father Westerwoudt said Mass as usual, in spite of his fellow missioner's protests, but his weakness was so great that he trembled at the altar. He was very ill all day and, though all visitors were kept away from him, his state did not improve. On Monday, March 21, he wished to go to Paku, and it was difficult to prevent him from doing so. On Tuesday morning he said that he felt quite well again and that a brisk walk was just what he needed.

"And go he did," said Father Reyffert, "his departure filling me with anxiety. I can see him now as he descended the stairs of our house and left the Singhi, never to return."

He seems to have borne the journey well. The Brothers, who had had word of Father Westerwoudt's illness, did not expect him. They had gone on a visit to Father Klerk at Bau, and were not at home to receive him. When they returned they found the Singhi missioner waiting. Brother Theodore, who had known Father Westerwoudt at Mill Hill, soon perceived that he was far from well. The retreat opened that evening, but all who were making it saw how difficult it was for the missioner to speak, and what actual pain he was suffering. During the whole night he lay awake, and they heard him groaning incessantly. In the morning he was unable to swallow any food. The Brothers were much disturbed, and on the third evening Brother Theodore could bear it no longer. He advised the missioner to go to Kuching and consult a physician. "Nonsense, man," replied Father Westerwoudt with a smile, "I shall be quite well within a couple of days. Now don't worry about me any longer."

So the retreat was continued. Father Westerwoudt grew worse every day, and on the following Sunday the Brothers again urged him to have medical aid. "Tomorrow we will go to the Singhi together", he told Brother Theodore, "and I will show you my new mission." Luckily, Father Klerk arrived just in time to prevent

the execution of this project. Felix was obliged to yield and was sent at once to Kuching. He was taken by rail and boat, through the good offices of the Borneo Company, which had its own railroad near the Paku mission. Meanwhile Brother Theodore was sent to break the news on the Singhi. "Don't frighten them," Felix warned him, "don't tell them that I am ill."

The missioners at Kuching were much startled by Father Westerwoudt's appearance. For a few days he was able to sit up, but soon he grew too weak to leave his bed. Father Reyffert hastened to Kuching, where he found his companion very ill, coughing continually, and with a fever which did not leave him. As soon as malaria and pneumonia declared themselves simultaneously, little hope was entertained for this precious life. The suffering missioner was surrounded by every comfort and received good medical care. Catholics and Protestants vied with one another in kindness, but the patient declined visibly.

On April 4 he was advised to arrange all his affairs and to receive the last Sacraments. He received Holy Communion on his knees beside his bed, and then he was anointed. "Now I am quite prepared", he said. Father Dunn was absent and it was feared that he would return too late, but he arrived just twenty-four hours

before Felix's death and was able to say adieu to his beloved son in Christ.

During his illness Felix never complained. He prayed constantly and declared that he had placed himself entirely in God's keeping. He felt great joy in the thought that his dear Dyaks would be cared for by Father Reyffert, and he was sure of the Sisters, too, for they had promised him never to forsake the Singhi. His soul knew no shadow of fear. "I trust that Our Lady will not suffer me to remain long in Purgatory", he said. He spoke of all his loved ones in the homeland, and sent them his greetings and his last blessing. His brethren had given him a bottle containing a few drops of Lourdes water. This afforded him great consolation. But he was unselfish even at the end and he feared to deprive the other missioners. "My people will soon go to Lourdes," he said, "and if you ask them they will certainly send you some water."

Meanwhile, Holy Week had begun and the dying pastor insisted that Father Reyffert return to the Singhi so that his beloved flock might fulfil their Easter duties. On the Singhi a novena was in progress for Father Westerwoudt's recovery, for he had won at last those unfeeling hearts. When the Dyaks learned from Father Reyffert how serious their pastor's illness was, they wept bitterly and some set out for Kuching

to visit him. There they were told that there was no hope. The missioner spoke to each one in person. He made them promise to remain faithful to God and to their religion, in order that they might see him again in heaven.

On Easter Sunday, Father Reyffert returned to Kuching. The Sisters had given him some roses and lilies from the Singhi altar for Father Westerwoudt. While the patient was asleep they were removed from his bedside, as it was feared their odor was too strong. When he awoke he missed them and said: "Where are the flowers the good nuns sent me? Bring them back and do not take them away again. The Sisters might think I had forgotten them in my last hour." Even in his agony his heart kept its exquisite delicacy.

On Easter Monday Father Westerwoudt began to be delirious. While in this state he asked urgently for something, but his brethren could not understand him. When he came to himself they found that he had asked for holy water. He wished to be sprinkled repeatedly with it, for he feared that he might give way to a temptation of anger or of impatience during his attacks. He suffered greatly during the night, but did not die until Wednesday morning at nine o'clock. Then he expired peacefully in the arms of his brethren. The next morning, Thursday, April

14, a solemn Requiem Mass was sung and Father Westerwoudt was buried. His grave was not in the Catholic cemetery of Kuching, but near the church, in the very shadow of the tabernacle. A friend of former days chose for him an epitaph from the Roman catacombs:

Felix in pace,
Vivas in Deo beatus.

Meanwhile, the news of his death had been sent in all haste to the Singhi. His people made wreaths of all the white flowers they could gather, and late at night, by torchlight, they hurried to Kuching to behold their beloved father once more. Father Westerwoudt had gone to God on the closing day of the novena his people were making for him. On the following Sunday they had no priest to say Mass for them. One of the boys started the rosary, but he was unable to continue, for the little congregation burst into sobs, weeping for the Father they had lost. They wished to see his grave, and so, sometime afterwards, the Sisters with their pupils went down to Kuching.

The Borneo missioners felt that Father Westerwoudt's death was a loss to the whole mission. They were unanimous in praising his virtue, and this meant not a little from men who themselves practised priestly virtue to a heroic degree. Dur-

ing Felix's last illness, Father Haidegger wrote, while he was seated by his friend's death-bed: "It is a heavy blow to the mission to lose its best and holiest man." Father Reyffert said of him:

> He kept nothing for himself, but gave all for all. Holiness, for him, consisted in doing everything as perfectly as possible with regard to God, to his fellowman, and to himself. His every action was modeled on the lives of the Saints. His whole life was a species of martyrdom. It was all the more sublime because he endured in patience and gladness of heart without any human consolation, without encouragement nor admiration, and, for the greater part of the time, alone.

Father Dunn, Father Westerwoudt's Superior, said that he considered it one of the greatest blessings of his life to have known Felix. He felt drawn towards the Singhi missioner somewhat as people must have felt themselves drawn towards Our Divine Saviour during His mortal life. Father Jackson, Felix's first Superior in the mission, wrote of him: "I never met a priest who followed more closely in the footsteps of the Saints, and I know that the other Fathers and the Sisters thought likewise."

Father Aelen, during a visit to the Singhi, was obliged to stop several times while saying Mass,

so overcome was he by the realization of how the Singhi missioner was spending himself for his handful of Christians. He declared that what he had witnessed there would suffice to convert even an unbeliever. Father Driessen, eight years after Father Westerwoudt's death, wrote:

> Without fear of exaggeration, I testify that Felix was the most humble and most mortified missioner I ever met. His sole end was God and the salvation of souls; and no fatigue, no hunger or thirst, was ever too much for him. I believe there was no virtue which he did not possess in an eminent degree.

This testimony was given after the passing of time had allowed first enthusiasms to cool. The same year Father Westerwoudt's biographer recorded:

> The dying of the seed has brought life in the Singhi mission. The Christians are not sham Christians; they understand the Catholic religion, and they practice it. They stand firm against the pagan influences that surround them. One of the surest proofs of this is the way they receive the Sacrament of Penance. Elsewhere, the missioner finds that the newly converted may have very little conception of what sin is, and, therefore, no contrition, or else may wilfully conceal sins; but on the Singhi administering the Sacrament is a consolation to the missioners.
>
> By what miracle of grace did the Singhi missioner bring his flock to this understanding? Was it by

FATHER WESTERWOUDT'S SUCCESSORS AND THE BOYS OF THE SINGHI MISSION (*See page 115*)

teaching, by prayer, or because he had offered himself as a victim for them? God alone knows.

The Christian families live quite apart from the heathen, whom they far surpass in civilization. All the Christians can read and write, as none of the pagans can. Father Westerwoudt's first and most beloved convert, Joseph Kottir, is now a good husband and father and a real pillar of the mission. There is a great difference between the semi-savage boys who surrounded Felix as his pupils, and the friendly and neatly-clad lads, intelligent of face, who now gather around the Singhi missioner.

The Singhi Christians are as yet a little flock — ten families, numbering seventy souls. But, thanks to the efforts of Father Westerwoudt and his successor, that day is at hand when Christ will reign over what the Prefect Apostolic, Father Dunn, does not hesitate to call —

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